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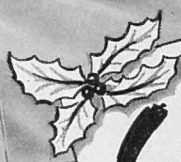


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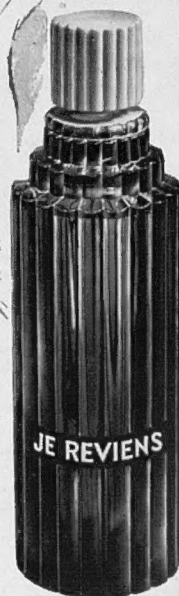
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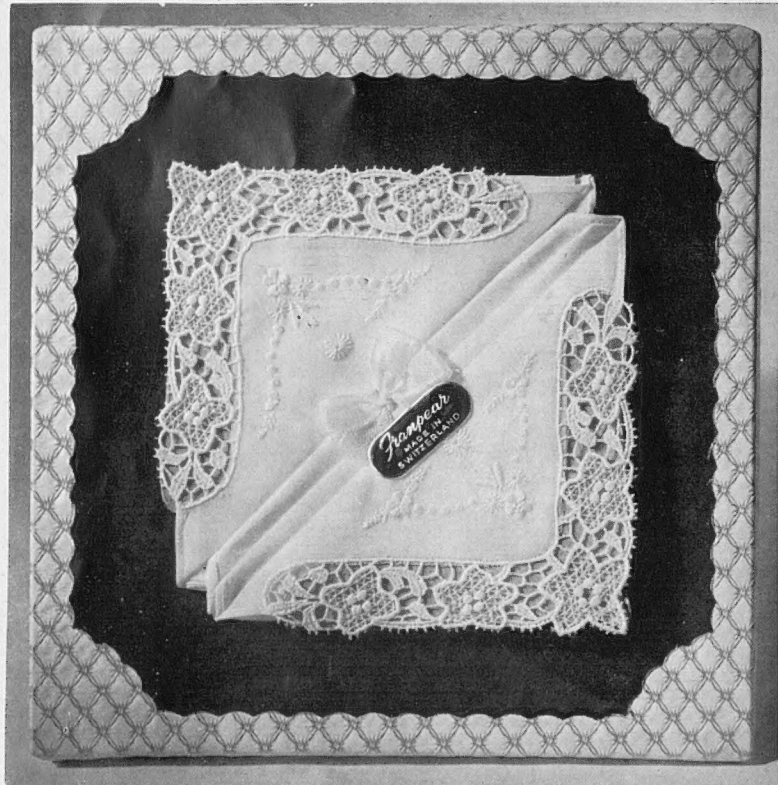


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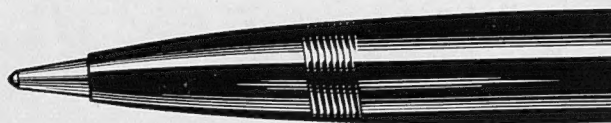
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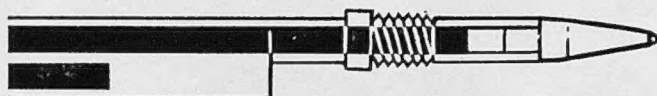
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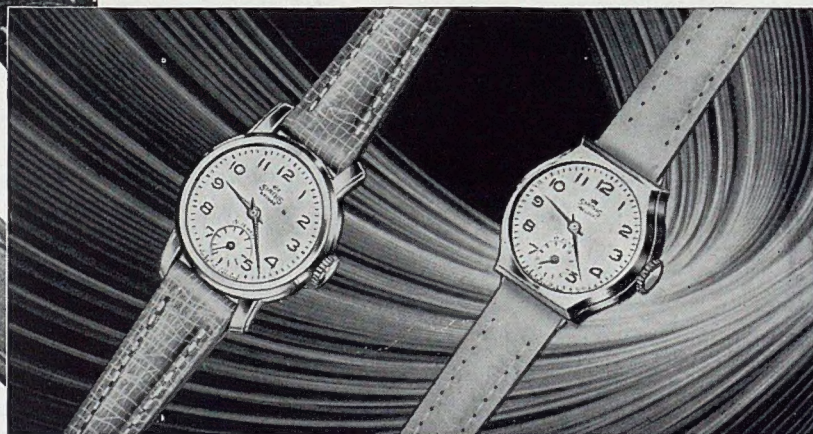
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We offer—

THE true story of the Magi by Michael Harrison, illustrated by reproductions from a fifteenth-century Book of Hours (page 12). A Christmas Meditation from Canon Carpenter of Westminster Abbey (page 44). A survey of historic gifts (page 38) and a water-colour by Francis Russell Flint showing the Queen's return (page 34)

ELIZABETH BOWEN's new Christmas story is called "Gothic Wing" (page 18) and "Speak To The Wind" by Enid Alexander (page 9) is the ghost story which is essential to every Christmas Number

JEAN STANGER's poem of Jennifer Jane (page 46) is illuminated by Glan Williams, as is Ronald Hingley's (page 24). Paul Holt gives admirable advice on party games (page 42) and Col. E. H. Carkeet James, Governor of the Tower of London, describes his domain (page 20)

THE Cracker, or Bon-Bon, now a serious item for collectors, becomes the subject of learned historical research (page 16). Bernard Mills describes the greatest act in his circus experience (page 37)

THE cover, by Frederick Banbury, shows the wedding of Mr. Trundle to Isabella Wardle, as described in chapter 28 of *Pickwick*. The characters include The Fat Boy, Sam Weller, Mr. Snodgrass, Miss Emily Wardle, Mr. Winkle, Miss Arabella Allen, The Vicar of Dingley Dell, Mr. Wardle, Old Granny Wardle, Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Tupman

THE Editor and staff of *The TATLER* wish their readers the Compliments of the Season. Good Health, Good Fortune, Good Company, and Good Reading



*If there is beauty at Christmas, then it is to be found in our old Church Carols.
Like the bells in the clear frosty night sky they ring out from young voices in Cathedral
and Church from every town and village in our land, telling the story of our hopes . . .
our hopes for Peace and Prosperity . . . which we of The Standard Motor Company
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SPEAK TO THE WIND

ENID ALEXANDER WRITES A DELICATE AND HAUNTING HISTORY WHICH HAS ITS INSPIRATION IN LEGEND. THE AUTHOR'S HIGHLY INDIVIDUAL APPROACH PLACES THIS STRANGE TALE BEYOND THE CATEGORY OF GHOST STORY. IT TAKES THE READER INTO A WORLD OF IMAGINATION WHERE SPIRITS BID FOR A HEARING . . . AND A HOLD

IN the warm weeks that followed the christening, trees and hedges shook fragile leaves from their quiver and, in the copse, hart's tongue ferns unwound rococo scrolls around the entrance to the earth, enfolding it tenderly, withdrawing it from sight of the civilized country below.

The earth was too large for them, a warren of a place carved from the yellow soil by an earlier tenant, but it satisfied the ideas of the vixen, who was a Leicestershire fox. Her first husband had been

killed in a hunting accident near Quorn and she had come south and married again, and all that spring she occupied herself with her one cub; and the old dog spent most of his time elsewhere.

Each morning, as dawn quickened more certainly to summer day, the cub would adventure to the mouth of the earth and lie on sun-warmed soil and worry rabbit remains her mother left, and sometimes half-crouching, with pointed ears and oblique eyes enquiring after sound or movement in the patterned saucer of country below, she would ponder on the story of her christening. The old fox affected to have forgotten the incident. On that

soft evening earlier in the year when spring had clearly foretold the close of the hunting season, it was natural that she and the dog should have forgotten to ask the blessing of the southerly wind on the christening party.

EVENTUALLY it blew in without invitation, and there had been blustering talk about an enchantment if the cub should so much as graze a paw, a gusty threat that she would change shape and regain her proper form only when she had learnt to laugh, to cry, and to do some other strange thing that since had been forgotten. Afterwards, the old fox

[Continued overleaf]

Continuing—

SPEAK TO THE WIND

neglected it all: hounds had stopped, her head was full of other things, she went off on day excursions with a fine assurance.

But the little vixen adventured in the strange world with wonder and drowsy alarm. By early autumn she had taken to straying through dew-drenched ferns, across gorse-mottled pasture branded by spring fires, into the hills where only the sound of larks tingled in the silence and even the echoes slept. Sometimes, when some hidden creature moved secretly amongst the brittle grass, her hackles would sharpen and her brush twitched as if she might be captured all at once by noiseless laughter. And not infrequently, when the frosts set in and the evenings took their share of each day, as she returned in the colourless hour, fingered by long suckers of the saplings in the copse, she heard her father or uncles bark and prologued the note till it was almost a cry, but one of lonely desire. Man she knew only as the supernatural killer.

★ ★ ★

"EARS: pointed; Eyes: brown, oblique; Hair: auburn; Build: . . ." the eyes of the young policeman passed on, belated, from the outline of her jersey to the outline of his writing, "... slight." "Age?"

"I don't remember."

He stopped himself from glancing again, wrote: "about seventeen," and ran an uneasy finger round the collar of his uniform with the silver "P.C. 92" on it, as if to reinforce the idea that he was a cipher dealing with ciphers. The same look had been in the eyes of other women brought into the station, it worried him because he was neither as old nor as stale as the uniform made him look, and sometimes he felt as if it were he who was the subject for examination. Fortunately it was the business of the law to peel away individuality, humanity, dignity, anything that could entitle them to respect, and render them in the more manageable form of a Case. He looked beyond her, at the hooped iron fireplace, the Victorian helmeted colleagues beyond the glass panelled door, and rammed his thoughts into this solid setting, nodding towards the bloody handkerchief round her fingers. "What happened to your hand?"

"I don't remember."

But though the look on her face was the same, it was not directed hungrily towards him. It rested eagerly on something behind his shoulder. He turned and on the high window-sill saw his lunch, a plate of meat sandwiches. "Where did you get that?" he looked sceptically at the red-fox fur incongruously slung over her arm.

"I don't remember. But it's mine."

"Prior to accident, remembers nothing." He called a subordinate and handed over a carbon copy. "Circulate all stations."

It was the first of a bodyguard of forms, formalities, admission sheets, medical sheets, discharge sheets leading through the Poor House to her final constitution as a citizen in the approved home of Miss Isobel Sheets, 10A Wisborough Road, Friern Barnet, N.20.

MORE rain may not have fallen on Wisborough Road than other places, but there seemed always to be tears marbling the window whenever she stood and stared-out-at-the-privet-hedge, and the shiny, empty road that led uphill, round behind some more houses, and back to where it started.

From beside the singing gas fire and the

radio, with a world of stations on the dial and a finger that pointed permanently to "Light," Isobel said: "Why don't you find something to do, Renarte? You're always restless, but you never find anything to occupy you." Isobel's thick, naked legs were pinkly scored with heat. Her work basket, like a squalid cornucopia, tumbled out soiled underclothes and torn stockings. The room itself was small, cube shaped, cell-like, the fire peered from the wall like the eye of a warden.

Renarte turned about smoothly, moving with great economy, "Nobody has any need for me," gracile as a cat, without a cat's furtive flavour. "I might try being a child's nurse this time."

"I shouldn't think you were at all suited."

"I wasn't suited to packing biscuits." It was not defiance, simply a plain statement.

Isobel said: "You can't expect people to keep anyone who sings and chatters when they work." She said: "Work apace, apace, apace, honest labour hath a lovely face." As if the material of her face had coagulated in a long drip, her nose, thick and curved, hung closely above the blue baby wool she was making into something for herself. "And then no one



would take you without references. If only we knew what sort of home you had come from."

"A big yellow house with carving over the door."

"But who knows that is true, Renarte?"

"Who can say it isn't?"

ISOBEL finished counting and said: "Sometimes, Renarte, you worry me. One would think you believed the things you invent about yourself."

"Doesn't everybody?"

"You have a perfect right to your feelings. But some people would call it lies."

"It might not make much difference to my feelings if I hadn't. Everyone else goes arm in arm with the person they were and the one they are going to be. I have nothing. I'm nobody." She moved to the mirror. Her still, rather shy manner, her silences, contrasted with her notably lithe, certain movement and the living intelligence in her bright, dark eyes.

"It's odd you're the only person the police ever found who has never been claimed."

"The best thing would be if someone married me." She heard Isobel's spurring laughter. "Why d'you think they won't?"

"For one thing you want to be a bit more feminine." Isobel gave her engagement ring a satisfied turn, as if she were fixing Philip, her fiancé, more firmly into place. "You aren't

domestic either," she said, handling the knitting as she might a sword and buckler. "What were those crumbs in your sheets last night?"

"They were some factory biscuits."

"Perquisites, I suppose. And that reminds me: why were there only three chops in that parcel from the butcher this week? What happened to the fourth?"

Renarte said: "D'you suppose Philip thinks me unfeminine?" She was looking at herself in the mirror.

"I shouldn't think Philip ever gives you a thought."

Renarte said nothing. Her mind was looking at Philip's stubby, low-growing hair, his corrugated forehead, his small confident hedgehog's eyes, and she was feeling again his blunt exploring hands like inflated rubber gloves. On her demure mouth, in her dark attentive eyes beneath sandy lashes was the same secret expression as when she had looked at the policeman's sandwiches.

Isobel said: "I can't imagine who would be likely to want to marry you."

"A hedgehog, perhaps."

"A hedgehog!" But the rest was unsaid, because there was an unaccustomed noise in the room. "Renarte, are you laughing? I don't believe I ever heard you laugh before."

AT the stop in Archway Road the queue broke round the stern of the bus, then retreated in disorder. "Two only. Only two, I said." The clocks were beginning to strike a disorderly nine. She was going to be late. There was going to be a fog: the air was already emulsified. Suddenly and without design she crossed the road and boarded a nearly empty trolleybus going to Highgate.

On the Heath, cradled in the fresh silence of morning, she was less isolated than in the oscillating life of the town. Alone, she noticed less, and it hurt less that everyone was unlike herself; in a crowd the solitude was stifling, terrifying, she armoured herself against it with hate. Alone, even the surreptitious remembered triumph with Philip lost its flavour. Isobel had wanted him, and to outdo Isobel, and also to be like Isobel, Renarte had wanted him, too. Winning, she found the victory tasteless. Now the flame of bitter laughter had lit a new independence. Love, the mystery, was not a mystery after all, and it was not the sesame she hunted for. Thinking so, something rose in her throat, and pricked under her lashes.

The fog had dwindled till it was nothing more than morning mist in the hollows. Half-way up a long slope, a brimming stone basin had a squirrel and a stoat carved on one side, and the gaping grotesque mask of man's comedy on the other. The water overflowed across a cracked pavement, teetering away as an ineffectual stream escorted by stunted bushes. Staring at the broken pavement where rusty water diluted the earth to soft yellow soil, Renarte fumbled for a memory, seeing it with eyes that remembered what the mind could not recall. Besides Kenwood House a magnolia bloomed; daffodils blew under still unleafed beeches; in the illusory light the black and white ducks on the pond were striped buoys moored to their reflections on pewter water.

SHE was going on towards the rising meadows when something moved on the farther shore. Against the chalky stem of a birch tree, a creature as orange as the alder twigs beside the water, and as still, stooped to drink. For an unmeasured moment, Renarte's thin face and inquiring look reached for the watchful eyes opposite, while something in her, older than words, recognized and saluted not only the kindred life, but the alder beside it, the spiral of buds, the ancient, pagan symbol of hope.

A woodpecker was drilling close at hand. In

the uncertain sunshine, the shadow of a leaning elm was tangled in last year's grass. When thought returned, looking up she saw the thousand knotted buds of springtime, like unfallen rain, between her and the high clouds; and fingers of the wind touched something cold on her face as all at once the discord of her life resolved in sudden, soft, unaccountable tears.

IN the dark, Philip waited for Renarte by the bus stop for nearly half an hour; and Isobel, waiting for Philip, spent the evening searching for her missing engagement ring. Both prized objects, together with the fox fur, were in the cab of a friendly lorry driver on the first lap of a long journey to nowhere in particular.

Not all the intervening years were spent on the streets. The agility of her wits, the tranquillity of her emotions, adapted her for every kind of illicit transaction. She could have become rich, and she had an inborn taste for idleness and night life, luxury. But she never settled. For a while she worked as an artist's model: her colouring, the planes of her pointed face were paintable, and she could hold a pose, without losing life, beyond normal.

For a little she worked as a mannequin; once she was a decoy in a smash and grab raid. Unhampered by conscience or affections, fickle, unpredictable, she was endlessly hunted: by predatory men, by jealous women, and by police, police in grey uniforms with sham gold braid, police with cloaks and batons, police with hyacinth-shaped helmets, and was herself for ever secretly hunting: for a forgotten vision of beauty, for the lost companionship of solitude, for peace and accord beyond the arguments of men, for an ultimate solution of her existence understood only by the wind.

It was when the chase at length had become most wearying, most pressing that she doubled back, and one December day passed through immense gates and along a drive that crossed a rolling park, and presently sank to sidle along a lake.

All around, the earth was overlaid with

discarded leaves, shearings of blue and gold from tattered willows on the bank. Snow had begun to drop, unhurried flakes that revolved in the unbreathing air and, diving noiselessly into the lake, were swallowed instantly by the still water. A single black swan flexed its tenuous neck to the melancholy, horn-like voices of some coots. Nothing else spoke to the ear but the sound of her feet in the leaves hushing the silence. After a while the road turned, surmounted a contemplative stone bridge, and was in full sight of a mansion. And Renarte stopped.

It was a great warren of a place, built in yellow stone in an earlier style, with rococo ornament about the entrance. Below the courtyard was a formal terrace with sculptured trees, and above the doorway, a stone fox rested a forepaw on a tarnished gold ball. Seeing it, Renarte understood that her life had had a beginning, and she knew it also was to have its end.

THEY took her as scullery maid. She had not advanced emotionally and the many years had not much changed her small face except that the look of hunger, that first had hovered there in the police station, had become a look of enduring want.

Even then she might not have stayed, knowing the chase was not far behind her, but she was sustained by a feeling of expectation about the house. Downstairs, she asked the cook: "What is it that's going to happen?"

"The decorations and that? Christmas, of course."

"What's Christmas?"

"Christmas? Why . . . plum puddings, pies. Goodness me girl . . ." They were in the vaulted kitchen; the cook was forcing an eel of icing through a calico bag to make a track like a sand worm on top of a black cake. ". . . wherever do you come from?" She was a big woman, with good nature resting on the tips of her mouth but middle age and contentment and her own kind of success had insulated her more securely from life than any

sour temper. "Hurry now and wash the baking bowl."

So, upstairs, Renarte asked the nurse, not one of the hospital nurses ticking to and fro attending to the sick owner of the house, but the old nanny sitting on a low chair by the high brass-bound fireguard in the neglected nursery: "What's Christmas?"

"Gracious me!" Do dreams age with the body, shrivel with the puckering of grey cheeks? Do visions fade with shrunk sight behind steely spectacles? "Why, it's Holy Night." Had the old woman herself dwindled till she in turn had become a child waiting, under the frieze of romping cocks and hens and the inevitably ticking cuckoo clock, for someone to summon her away to sleep?

"What's that?" Renarte took the tray with the cup and the crumby plate.

"Well, I never!"

And later, outside the back door in the early cold of morning, helping unload chrysanthemums off the cart that brought them from the gardens to the house, she asked the boy who handed them to her, his fingers overlapping hers, "What's Christmas?"

Startled, his brown eyes speckled like a bird's egg, asked if it were a joke. Then, as she waited, his unrupted laughter sank to puzzlement that was a reflection of her own. "Why . . . mid-winter," he slammed shut the tail-board and pegged it, "Christmas Eve's the longest night of the year." And she took the anxious, inquiring look from his eyes as he drove off down the drive, back in her own into the servants' hall.

Finally, hesitatingly, she asked one evening when everyone but the prettiest kitchen maid and one of the youngest footmen was outside listening to the Waits: "What's Christmas?"

CHRISTMAS?" The kitchen maid, usually self-conscious and very shy, dramatized her scorn freely in front of the footman. "Peace and goodwill."

"What is goodwill?"

"Don't you know?"

"Is it what happens tomorrow?"

The footman said: "What's happening tomorrow, my girl, or any time now is that the boss here is pegging out. 'Any time' they were saying today at teatime."

And the kitchen maid giggled. "And then the foxes will come, I suppose."

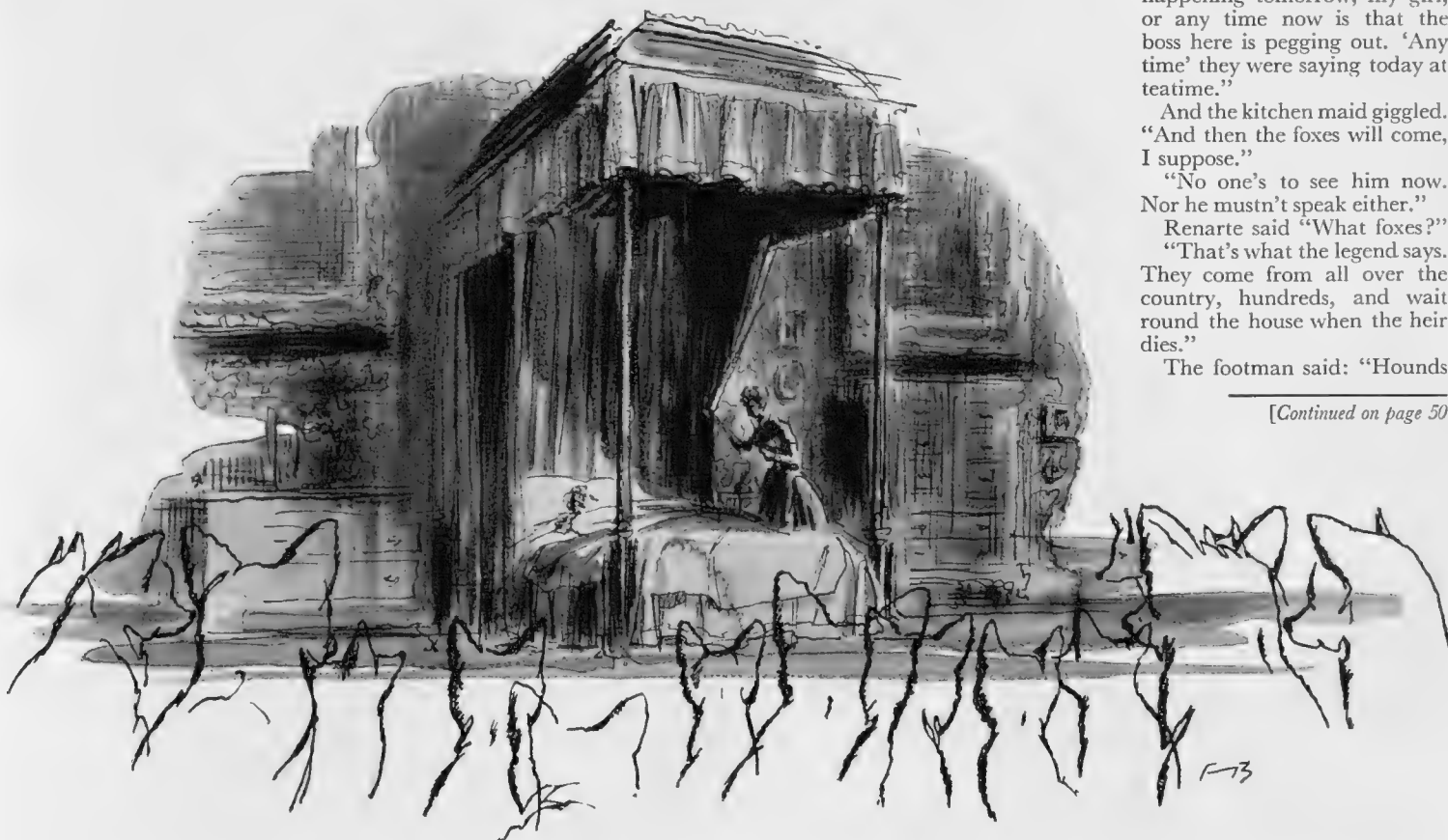
"No one's to see him now. Nor he mustn't speak either."

Renarte said "What foxes?"

"That's what the legend says. They come from all over the country, hundreds, and wait round the house when the heir dies."

The footman said: "Hounds

[Continued on page 50]



OF all the legends which circulated Christendom in the Middle Ages, none was so popular as that of the Magi, the Three Wise Men—or the Three Kings, as they were known in England.

Upon the bare statement of their coming to see the Infant Christ, which is to be found in the Gospel according to St. Matthew, the rich fancy of the medieval imagination had reared an elaborate structure of legendry, though all the details of the legends are not to be dismissed as entirely fabricated. There often seems to be something more than a basis of fact in the details.

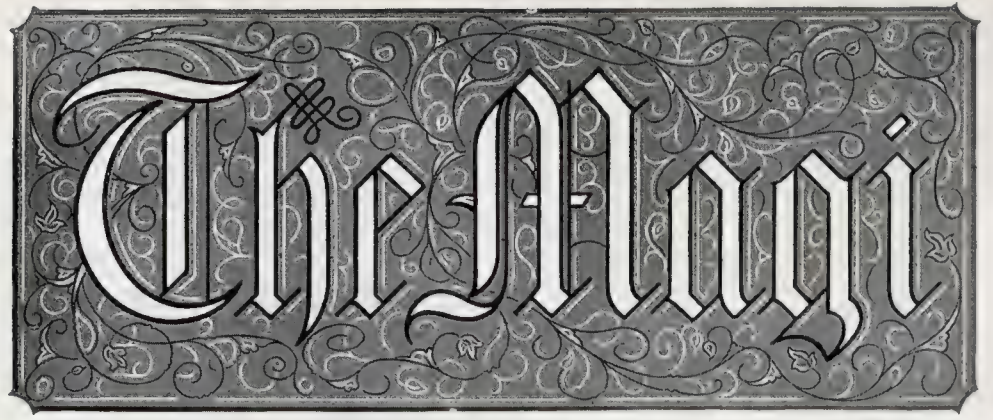
According to Chrysostom, Gaspar gave gold, Melchior gave "recles"—incense—and Balthasar gave myrrh. Smiling, the Holy Child accepted all three gifts at once, and miraculously spread a sumptuous feast, and prepared three comfortable beds for the "thre very kinges on their wai."

The supposed origins of Gaspar—Tarshish, and of Balthasar—Saba, may give the clue to the common origins of all three. Both Tarshish and Saba lie on the route to India: Tarshish being on the Red Sea, and Saba on both the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf. And Melchior, with his Semitic name, is given as being "King of Arabia"—which would not be unlikely. But at the bottom of the Red Sea, in the opposite direction to India, was a flourishing Arab—pre-Moslem Arab, of course—culture, centred about the goldmines which bear the generic name of "Ophir," now represented by the ruins of Zimbabwe in Rhodesia.

What makes the probable origin of all three Kings lie in the Southern Arab culture is that the youngest of them is always represented as being a Negro—and Zimbabwe, though an Arab settlement, was in a Negro land.

AMOST persistent legend relates that contrary winds blew the Three Kings to Southampton when they left the Holy Land. The old inns, scattered over England, which bear their sign are supposed to be their resting-places as they went to seek Joseph of Arimathea in Glastonbury, and returned, to pay a call on the way upon King Bran of Cornwall, who had lodged in the same Roman prison with St. Paul and had been converted to Christianity by the Apostle.

Even after their death, Gaspar, Melchior and Balthasar still continued their travels. Their bodies were brought to Constantinople by St. Helena, who was a British princess (and some say that it was from Britain that she brought them). In Constantinople, the Three Kings were

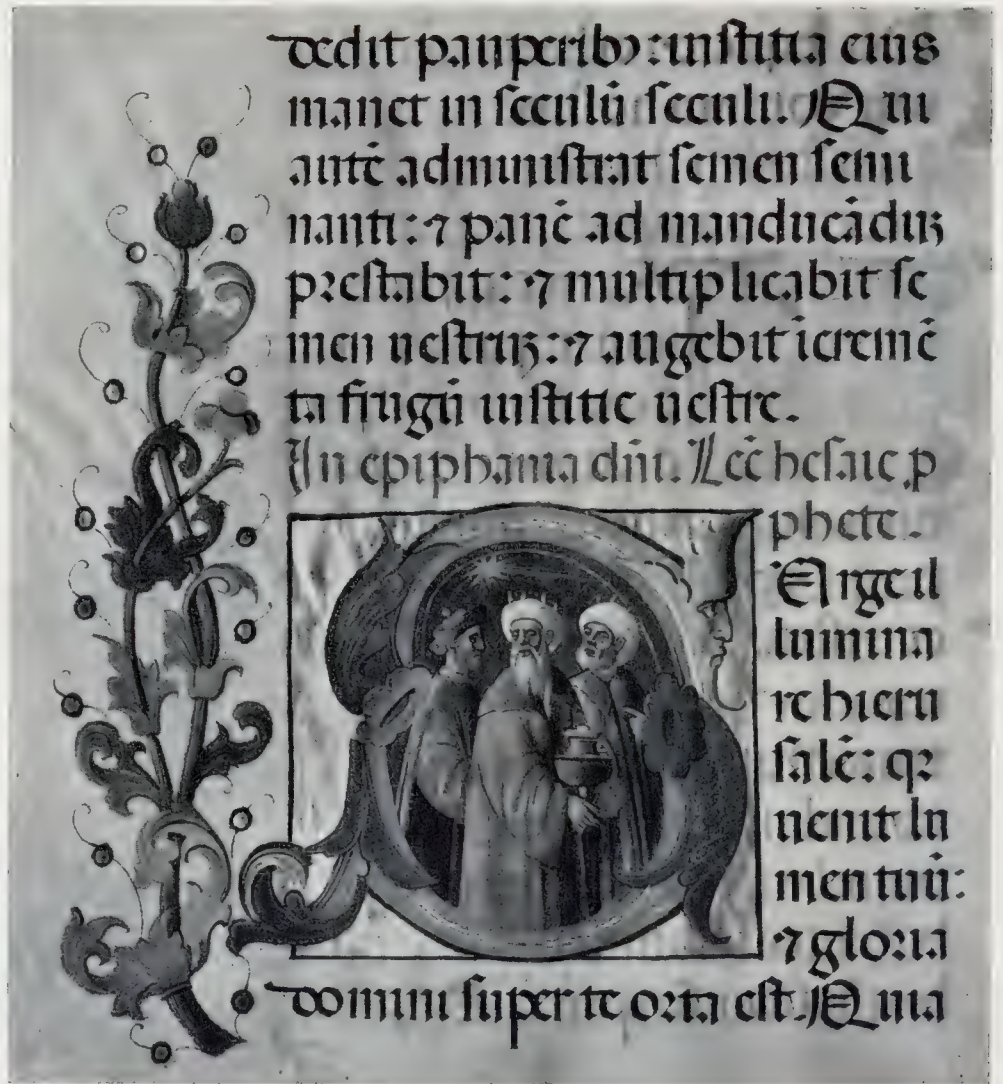


reddidit pauperibus: instituta eius
manet in seculū seculi. Qui
autē administrat semen semina-
nti: et panē ad manducandum
prestabit: et multiplicabit se-
men vestrum: et augebit ieremē-
ta fugiū iusticie vestre.

In epiphania dñi. Lēc hesaiē p-
phete.

Erge il-
lumina-
re hieru-
salē: q-
necit lu-
men tuū:
et gloria

domini super te orta est. Quia



The Three Kings depicted in an Italian fifteenth-century MS., now in the British Museum

laid to rest in a splendid tomb; but one day, as St. Eustorgius was talking to the Byzantine Emperor about the need for relics with which to consecrate his new church in Milan, the Emperor made him a gift of the Three Kings, and they went to Milan.

In 1162, Frederick Barbarossa raided Milan; the relics were moved to a place of safety—but that place was not safe enough. Frederick Red-Beard seized the Three Kings, and sent them, by his Chancellor, Raymond, to the Archbishop of Cologne, who accepted them gratefully, and housed them—together with the relics of SS. Felix Naebor and Gregory of Spoleto—in a shrine of enamelled metal which is among the artistic wonders of the world.

THE soldiers of Revolutionary France, seven hundred years later, did not manage to lay hands on the shrine; and a thief who tried to carry off part of it thirty years later panicked and dropped the pieces in a field. Even during the fearful bombing of Cologne in two wars, a hazard inconceivable to earlier ages, the shrine was unharmed; and pious Germans, gazing with wonder at their nearly unharmed cathedral in the desolation surrounding it, murmur that the Three Kings have not ceased from making gifts. . . .



THIS and the following two pages are from an illuminated Book of Hours once the property of Philip the Fair, King of Spain. German, late fifteenth century (British Museum). The vignettes (above) show the Kings following the Star, meeting King Herod and setting off for Bethlehem



THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI. Note that the convention of having one King a Negro is not observed by the artist. The smaller vignettes show Herod making a libation to his pagan gods and (lower vignette) the Angel warning the Kings not to return to Herod's court



HEROD personally superintends the Massacre of the Innocents. The upper small vignette shows the execution of the messengers who reported the Kings' escape. Lower vignette: two mothers watch while a soldier of Herod carries out his orders



A traditional theme in an early guise, circa 1870



A cracker-box label of the 1850s, but derived from an early art-type



2. Why is it degrading to practice spirit-rapping in a Parlour.

Date 1852, this topical "motto" records the accession of Napoleon III



With its companion this label of the late 1870s mocks the "Aesthetics"



The Victorian domestic scene dates from 1865



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High jinks of the 1870s



Typical German chromo—lithograph labels of the 1870s



German work of the first class, 1880



Very early label, reminiscent of Alice

From the same set to which Alice belongs



MIND YOUR EYE

The catch-phrase of the hour: 1865



A cracker-box top, circa 1868, shows the influence of Sir John Tenniel, illustrator of *Alice in Wonderland*

CHRISTMAS CRACKERS

The First 100 Years

• MICHAEL HARRISON •

CHRISTMAS without the cracker or (as it used to be called) the "bon-bon," is as inconceivable as Christmas without the Christmas card; and yet these two essentials to the perfect celebration of Yule were introduced to the world, by two Englishmen, only a little more than a hundred years ago: the Christmas card coming, in 1843, three years earlier than the cracker, which was not put on the market until the Christmas of 1846.

Tom Smith, inventor of the cracker, had started work in a confectioner's shop; but when the time came for him to start in business on his own, he resolved to specialize in making the white—and coloured—sugar decorations which are still fashionable for the embellishment of wedding-cakes. He began to experiment with new patterns, new colours, and—newer still—a higher quality than had formerly been obtainable. On a trip to Paris in 1844 he first saw the then newly introduced "bon-bon"; a packet of sugar plums opened by pulling and thus breaking the wrapping, and was duly impressed with the money-making possibilities of the novelty.

A few weeks before Christmas, 1844, Tom Smith, having laid in a stock of fancy papers and sugar-almonds, put his assistants to work wrapping "bon-bons," which sold well, though the sale slackened off to nothing as soon as the Christmas season had passed.

IT now came to him that he would have to add some further refinement and he conceived the notion of combining the "bon-bon" with the Valentine—and so, by February 14, 1843, Tom Smith's "First Improved Bon-Bon" was ready for the market: the original "bon-bon" with a romantically affectionate message inside. The motto was born!

The "bon-bon" soon joined the select com-

pany of Christmas necessities: the Christmas tree, and the Christmas card, and the Christmas pudding. It was not, however, until 1846 that Smith, by adding the "bang"—or, as it is called in the cracker-trade, the "snap"—invented the cracker that we know.

Even with the "snap," the original "bon-bon" had not quite become the modern cracker: there still remained the substitution of a "surprise" for sweets, and the addition of the paper hat. It was Tom Smith who introduced the element of the unexpected into cracker-pulling by putting a small present inside the wrapping, instead of the original handful of sweets—hence the technical term, "surprise"—but it was Tom's son, Walter, who showed that he had inherited the Smith blood when he proposed to include a paper-hat in each cracker.

The paper-hat, though, came after a dispensable but still integral part of the cracker: the coloured label.

FOR the first few years after his invention of the cracker, Tom Smith turned out only one model; but that splendid variety which now characterizes cracker-making all over the world was forced on the inventor by the unheralded dumping of several different kinds of crackers from abroad. With only a few days to go to Christmas, Tom Smith set to to design no fewer than eight different kinds of wrapping, and had the varieties ready for the market by the time that Christmas arrived.

Victorian cracker-labels are always very plain compared with some of the cards; for the elaboration of the cracker, corresponding to the elaboration of the card, was confined to the wrapper—and here all the ostentation of the secure later nineteenth century could let itself go. There was a limit to the elaboration of the Christmas card: there was technically no limit to the elaboration of the cracker—for, apart from the costliness of the wrapper, you

might insert the costliest presents you like.

Millionaires of that happy period felt themselves free to be as vulgarly ostentatious as they liked in the matter of Christmas crackers, and a childhood memory that I have is of a cracker that a guest had taken home from a Christmas dinner at Mr. Pierpont Morgan's house in Prince's Gate. The twenty-five years or so during which this splendid cracker had lain in a box had not dimmed the brilliant colouring of its purple and saffron satin; of its hand-made violets and lilies-of-the-valley; had not yellowed its hand-made Mechlin lace, or tarnished the golden monogram serving for label. I remember that I fingered this superb piece with a greater wonder after having been told that this—and every other cracker on Mr. Morgan's dinner-table—had contained a "surprise" costing £100!

THE cracker has developed another characteristic, which puts it apart from the Christmas card: its topicality. At first, the card was inclined to have a topical flavour, where the cracker—before label and motto had been introduced—had no flavour of topicality, even if it had a flavour of novelty.

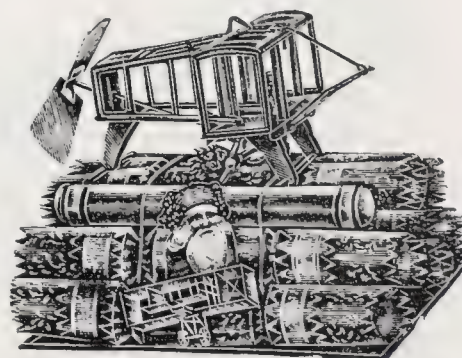
But as the card began to stereotype itself—at least, as regards subjects: religious, sentimental, Olde Englyshe, Olde Dyckenzenne, and so on—the manufacturers of crackers began to insist on an up-to-the-minuteness in their label and box designs which has on occasions led to some quite astonishing results.

For instance, the printing of the labels and boxes for Batgers' Aerial Scout's Crackers was put in hand in the autumn of 1903. The design shows boy-scouts flying tractor mono-planes. Now, the Wright brothers' first flight was made on December 17, 1903, in a pusher biplane, in which the operator was lying flat on his stomach, and not sitting upright in the cockpit, as the scouts are shown in the Batger designs.

In fact, lastly an aeroplane of such a design as that shown in the Batger drawings was not made until 1908—so that the search for topicality has led to what is no less than precursion.

THE cracker has always striven for something more than dead-line topicality: its makers have tried to foresee what will be popular months—many months—ahead. In only one element (apart from its "snap," of course) is topicality frowned upon, not so much by the manufacturers, as by the public.

Several times, the leading manufacturers have tested public reaction to a modernizing, an enlivening, of the motto. The public have reacted quickly—and definitely. Leave the Corn Alone! can sum that reaction up. The hoarier the mottoes' jokes; the more familiar the jingling doggerel and unabashedly sententious maxim, the more happy the public is to read the motto.



These "Waterplane" crackers of 1904-5, made by Batgers, complete with clockwork model, show the enterprising spirit of the cracker manufacturers



*"That has always
been my bath" said
Uncle Theodore*

by
**Elizabeth
Bowen**

Emergency In The Gothic Wing

ANASTASIA's telegram decided it—there was nothing for it but to re-open the Gothic Wing. For a number of reasons, Lady Cuckoo shrank from this decision; and her children glanced at each other and said: "Good heavens!" The Wing had been added to Sprangsbys Hall by an eccentric and, some said, peculiar ancestor round about 1800—there had been goings-on in it; some not quite the

thing. Finally, it had been sealed off by the double-locking of the two doors which connected it with the central part of the Hall—otherwise a most cheerful house. The Georgian block, raised on an ancient Tudor foundation and brightened by Victorian bow windows, was sufficiently roomy without the Wing—that is, for life as one lives nowadays.

Lady Cuckoo's idea of reviving an English old-time Christmas for the benefit of some American friends had, however, created an emergency. The Hall was once again to be overflowing. Till now, all had been well in hand, and preparations went on apace. Some few scarlet berries, spared by the birds, gleamed bravely out of the stacks of holly; the surrounding landscape had obligingly draped itself in a light but sparkling mantle of snow. There was no butler and only half a cook, but two or three allies out of the village had agreed to see her ladyship through Christmas. Log fires, burning never more brightly, roared their ways up the enormous chimneys and took at least the edge off the chill. Lady Cuckoo, passing from room to room in a fur-lined cape, on the eve of her house-party's arrival, was delighted—at least, until the telegram came.

Annoying Merribys down with mumps have now nowhere to go Christmas arriving tomorrow with Sims and Momo all news then fond love.

LADY CUCKOO read the above aloud. "This is the end," said the Sprangsbys children.

"Wire back 'full up'," suggested Arthur; who, engaged to Phyllida, the eldest, already counted as "family," so was here some days ahead of the other guests. He was atop of an unsafe ladder, attaching mistletoe to a chandelier. The two American Blomfields, a sister of Arthur's, two school-friends of Harold's (the elder Sprangsbys son) and, not least, Uncle Theodore were to arrive shortly. In view of the fact that also, to begin with, there were six Sprangsbys, Arthur's suggestion seemed realistic. "Be firm," he said.

"It seems unkind," mourned his future mother-in-law. "And anyway she hasn't put an address." "She knows a thing worth two of that!" said Phyllida, furious, letting go of the ladder Arthur was on, which began to slide. "And so, I daresay, do those wretched Merribys—I don't for an instant believe they've got mumps at all! So she picks on a darling sucker like *you*, Mama."

"I shall have to think," said poor Lady Cuckoo, with the air of one who goes to the last extreme.

Setting aside comfort, of which there ceased to be any hope, the distracted lady saw no way of arranging her house-party with, even, propriety. Uncle Theodore, seldom co-operative, would object to so much as sharing a bathroom. And only the Blomfields, alas, were married—single persons take up much more space. The younger Sprangsbys were, of course, doubling up; Arthur's sister would go in the old nursery. But, even so—no, there was not another inch! Into the Wing must Anastasia and Momo go. One must hope for the best! they *might* not notice. . . . Sims, she believed and hoped, was a little dog.

The upper door of the Wing was, therefore, that afternoon unlocked: the key grated rustily. Lady Cuckoo, to give face to the thing, personally headed an expedition consisting of three of her children and two of the gardeners' wives; these latter carrying firing, brooms and bed-linen. The explorers filed down the lengthy, shuttered and vaulted corridor: "Tck!" said one of the women, "isn't it musty!" Winter sunshine, however, soon streamed blandly into the painted rooms—and, outside the pointed windows, the park with its elms and snow reassuringly looked like a Christmas card. "This, with the stars on the ceiling, ought to do for *her* nicely," said Lady Cuckoo, displacing whirls of dust with a feather mop. "The young gentleman," she explained to a gardener's wife, "had better be in the one with those nice carved stags."

"You can't mean *Momo*, Mama?" protested one of her younger daughters. "Actually, he's a beastly little musician."

"Amelia darling, this *is* Christmas. Cousin Anastasia's kind to him; so should you be."

"She's horrible to Americans," said the child, stalwart in support of the U.S.A., where she'd been fêted during the war. "Nothing, now, will be fun for the sweet Blomfields—oh Mama, really, why *must* she come!"

Lady Cuckoo gave an evasive sigh. Poor Anastasia, how she did *not* endear herself—and seldom, frankly, had she been known to try. She adhered grimly to Lady Cuckoo; other supporters had long since faded away. How hard it is to be loyal and fair to all! Anastasia was interested exclusively in the arts, and showed it. She leaned, moreover, to the arts in their most advanced and forbidding forms: nothing did she so much despise as anything anybody had ever heard of. Seldom had Anastasia not in tow a still-to-be-recognized young genius; quite often Central European and too often furiously rude. Of these Momo had been the latest and, one was forced to agree, the worst—one could indeed hardly imagine anything less Christmassy than Momo. Anastasia herself had at one time been on the highbrow stage; though, as the Sprangsbys children pointed out, soon off even that again. She had once played *Mélanide*.

Lady Cuckoo reproached herself for these hard thoughts. And, oh, dear, what a reek of ancient damp arose from the Wing's cavernous fourposters! Giving orders that her own upper mattress should be moved in to be slept on by Anastasia, and Amelia's only mattress (to teach her charity) for Momo, the hostess pensively left the scene. In the corridor, she was at pains to skirt the somewhat dangerous head of the spiral staircase, connecting this floor of the Wing with the one below. For under the bedroom suite was a vault-like ballroom—vast, and in décor not unlike the surroundings for a Black Mass. Not in living memory had it been gaily danced in—you only had to glance at it to see why. The Sprangsbys children had at one time used it for roller-skating, till vibrations all but brought the ceiling down. Since then it, like the suite above, had been locked off. And all for the best, too. . . .

Lady Cuckoo was glad to find herself back in the cheerful, blameless, Christmassy main block of her home, the Hall.

★ ★ ★

NEXT day, Christmas Eve, the expected party began arriving, from teatime on. Car after car drew up, with a scrunch on the snow; each time the hall door, flung joyously open, emitted glowing lights and the Sprangsbys pelting out, in a troop, in welcome. Not less was the enthusiasm of the darling Blomfields, who emerged from the comparative warmth of a hired Daimler into the beautiful draughtiness of the teatime hall without anything so dim as a sneeze or blink. If Mrs. Blomfield tightened her furs around her, it was with a gesture which well became her. The Blomfields' delighted and noble faces shone.

"And for Harry," declared Carrie (or Mrs.)

Blomfield, "there's been just the final touch of perfection! We observed your antique Wing as we drove past it; and Harry's ever so interested in the occult."

"Our nice old faithful ghost," said Phyllida, "is usually sitting in the kitchen—I don't think he's ever missed a Christmas. The kitchen, you see, is Tudor. The Wing is simply a fake."

"Still, it's got *something*," said Mr. Blomfield, happily glittering with his *pince-nez*. "I unfailingly sensed that as we drove by. Tell me this—is it now inhabited?"

"Not normally," said the girl, passing crumpets to Mr. and Mrs. Blomfield. Mrs. Blomfield said: "All the same, Harry! I never rest since he's had this strange intimation. He's taken some remarkable spirit photographs."

"I'd *advise* the kitchen," said Lady Cuckoo, for a moment looking distraught. "Our dear ghost in there wears such a nice ruff; and altogether it's far more cosy."

Round the candle-lit tea-table, all was high spirits and good cheer—firelight dancing on the Georgian silver; family portraits beaming a welcome down at the newcomers out of their dim-gold, holly-wreathed frames. The youthful British reserve of Arthur's sister and Harold's school-friends, who entered next, all but immediately melted—how could it not? And distinction was added by Uncle Theodore, who took his place with a courteous though melancholy smile. *He*, however, was unable to look for long at anybody other than Lady Cuckoo. And, to crown all, there was a stir on the snow outside—after preliminary coughing and shuffling, the village carol singers burst into song. Noel, Noel. . . .

THEY were interrupted. Hollow hammering beat upon the Hall door—Lady Cuckoo blinked and put down her cup. She was too right: it *was* Anastasia and Momo. And Sims, who (truly a little dog) yapped, squirming, under his mistress's arm. They had had, it appeared, to walk from the station—not a taxi, owing to dreadful Christmas. "I am feeling terrible, thank you," said Anastasia, rolling round her haunted eyes in their sockets. "But, how could I not? What a dreary farce this all is." She pushed her way to a chair beside Lady Cuckoo's, darkly ignoring all others there. As for Momo, his contempt for the whole occasion was, as he indicated, unspeakable.

Phyllida Sprangsbys, having withdrawn with Arthur to put the finishing touches to tomorrow's Christmas tree, said: "That wicked Mama never broke it to Uncle Theodore."

"What, that Anastasia & Co. were coming?"

"Yes. She hadn't got the nerve, I suppose. So, did you see his poor darling face?"

"He wasn't in tearing form from the start, I thought."

"You see, Mama refuses to marry him." (Lady Cuckoo had been a widow for ten years.)

"But how could she, angel, if he's your uncle?"

"Oh, we just call him 'uncle' to cheer him up. Wasn't Anastasia vile to the Blomfields? Ha-ha, though; she's got to go in the Wing!"

"Honestly, Phyllida," asked Arthur, "what is all this about the Wing?"

"Aha!" said the girl with an awful look. "Perhaps if I ever told you, you'd never marry me. Or your poor hair might go bright white overnight! . . . Idiot, you've put that top star on crooked. No, don't dare kiss me again till you've got it straight."

Anastasia, dressed like a snake, was as usual last to come down to dinner. "The fire in that room of mine doesn't burn," she announced at once. "Are there jackdaws' nests in the chimney? And what am I to do about a bath? I could share yours," she added, turning to Uncle Theodore.

Uncle Theodore all but dropped his glass—the highball fixed for him by kind Mr. Blomfield. Outrage rendered him speechless for some time. "You would not know where

ST. GEORGE FRENGLAND, M.P.



"Next question, please!"

to find it," he said defiantly. "Oh yes I would," said Anastasia smugly. "I've made inquiries. It's the green one—a becoming colour to me."

"That has always been MY bath," said Uncle Theodore in his most ominous tone. The rest of the party stood round, helpless—Anastasia tossed her head of hair; which, but for being a tarnished red, might itself have been one of the jackdaws' nests. "You're far too set," she declared, "in bachelor ways! Anyone would imagine that you lived here. . . ." Fortunately, dinner was announced.

AFTER dinner they played idiotic games. Amelia disguised herself in a bear-skin and chased Momo—who, it turned out, rather enjoyed himself: he leaped up on the back of a sofa and let off an imaginary gun, shouting: "Bang, bang, bang!" He then seized Mrs. Blomfield around the waist and whirled her away with

[Continued on page 52]

"No, don't dare kiss me again. . . ."



The Story of the YEOMEN WARDERS

FOR decades the Yeomen Warders of the Tower of London in state dress have accompanied the Resident Governor in full dress to the Chapel Royal of St. Peter ad Vincula on Christmas Day, Easter Day and Whit-Sunday. These parades are among the many which the Yeomen Warders have to attend in state dress which they were first authorized to wear by Edward VI in 1552.

The Tower records show that the Duke of Somerset, the Protector, when he was a prisoner in the Tower, received humane and considerate treatment from his warders. He so appreciated their attention that he promised that on his release he would request the Sovereign to grant them the honour of wearing state dress. In due course this request was approved and the Yeomen Warders are attired on state occasions in the same dress as Henry VII's Bodyguard, whose brilliance can be appreciated in the picture on page 22.

IN this uniform every Yeoman Warder is armed with a short sword. The Chief Warder's badge of office is a silver mace, which is a replica of the White Tower. Records show that in 1792 the inhabitants of the Tower Liberty subscribed and paid for this mace to be carried before their Coroner. That appointment lapsed and after certain vicissitudes the mace reached the Tower where it became the Chief Warder's accoutrement.

THE Yeoman Gaoler, the second-in-command, carries on state occasions the celebrated ceremonial axe. Children are always disappointed to learn that this axe has not spilt blood. Since the reign of Henry VII (1485-1509) the Yeoman Gaoler, when escorting prisoners from the Tower to their trials at Westminster, has carried this axe. It is in a beautiful state of preservation. On completion of the trial if the prisoner had been found guilty, the sharp edge of the axe was turned towards him throughout the return journey.

The remainder of the Yeomen Warders,



COL. E. H. CARKEET-JAMES, C.B.E., O.B.E., M.C., J.P., Major and Resident Governor of the Tower of London, standing with Mrs. Carkeet-James outside the Queen's House, their residence at the Tower

when in state dress uniform, are armed with a partisan, a type of pike eight feet long with the insignia of the reigning Monarch on the head. On top of the wooden staff is fixed a handsome gold and red tassel nine inches in length. Henry VII is said to have armed his bodyguard with similar partisans.

The public frequently confuse the Yeomen Warders, H.M. Tower of London, with the Yeomen of the Guard, H.M. Bodyguard, St. James's Palace. They are two distinct bodies, the former performing full-time duty in the Tower, the latter part-time duty guarding the person of Her Majesty on state occasions. The Yeomen Warders are members of the Yeomen of the Guard (Extraordinary) and are sworn in as such. The Yeomen of the Guard wear state dress uniform only and the difference between it and that worn by the Yeomen Warders is that the former wear a red and gold crossbelt from left shoulder to right hip on which in olden days to bear the arquebus. The Yeomen Warders were not armed with this weapon.

In 1858 Her Majesty Queen Victoria approved of the Yeomen Warders wearing blue undress uniform and this is the dress in which the public usually sees them. The head-dress and jacket of this uniform are the same shape as those of the state dress.

WHEN the Duke of Wellington was Constable of the Tower, 1826-52, he considerably improved the conditions of service for Yeomen Warders and ordered that "None but deserving, gallant and meritorious discharged Sergeants of the Army should be appointed Warders of the Tower." These adjectives are still applied when selecting new candidates, and the rank of sergeant has been altered to warrant officer or colour sergeant. Also, after World War One a Secretary of State for War added the words "and Royal Air Force" after "the Army."

Provided a Yeoman Warder is medically fit, performs his duties efficiently and is recommended by the authorities, he may hold his appointment until he attains the age of seventy years.



FOR NINE CENTURIES the Tower has watched Thames traffic, changing in these years from a place of foreboding to a pleasant, well-loved shrine



The Yeomen Warders in the State dress which they wear on ceremonial parades. It is the same as that of Henry VII's bodyguard

Flash of Scarlet, Ring of Steel

THE Tower of London uniquely recalls an era more picturesque and flamboyant than our own, and visitors carry away with them impressions of grandeur that will never grow dim in their minds. The photographs on these pages show some of the elements contributing to this impression, the dark, ageworn walls which make a naturally contrasting background to the brave scarlet and gold of the Yeomen Warders, and the panoply of steel which the Armoury offers. It is no wonder that the Tower has become increasingly a place of pilgrimage and wonder, with its traditions so sturdily surviving, as they do, the heaviest assaults of the mechanical age

*Specially photographed for The TATLER by
Sir Geoffrey Cory-Wright, Bt.*



THE CHIEF WARDER, A. C. Griffin, holding the silver mace, made in 1792. He was appointed to the rank in January this year, after fifteen years' service in the Tower



THE YEOMAN GAOLER, W. H. Buckland, has been nineteen years at the Tower, and has held his present position since February. His axe dates from Henry VII's reign



On the march in the Age of Chivalry: a fascinating corner of the Armoury, whose collection is unsurpassed



In The Death Of A Favourite Cat

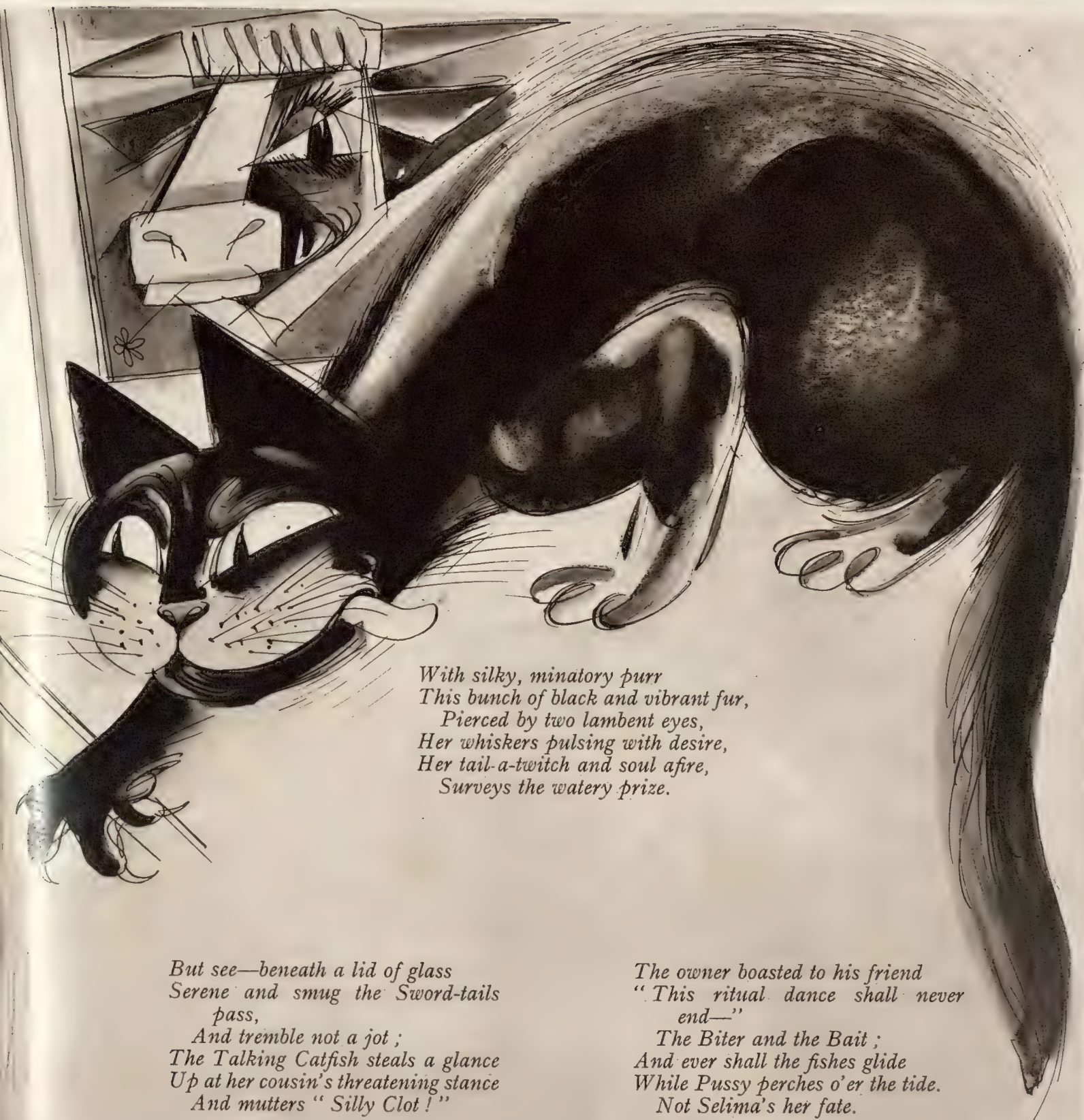
(Electrocuted In A Tropical Aquarium)

With Apologies To Thomas Gray

*Beneath a cubist cow in oils,
Past which through deftly winding coils
Th' electric current streamed,
With brightly glinting thermostat
(the scene—a Knightsbridge penthouse flat)
A chromiumed fish tank steamed.*

*Within the lush Cabomba glade
Beside a Myriophyllum's shade
A sleek Gourami sat;
A tiger Barb with flashing fin
Pursued a gleaming Characin,
Observed by Pussy Cat.*





*With silky, minatory purr
This bunch of black and vibrant fur,
Pierced by two lambent eyes,
Her whiskers pulsing with desire,
Her tail-a-twitch and soul afire,
Surveys the watery prize.*

*But see—beneath a lid of glass
Serene and smug the Sword-tails
pass,
And tremble not a jot ;
The Talking Catfish steals a glance
Up at her cousin's threatening stance
And mutters " Silly Clot ! "*

*The owner boasted to his friend
" This ritual dance shall never
end—"
The Biter and the Bait ;
And ever shall the fishes glide
While Pussy perches o'er the tide.
Not Selima's her fate.*

*" The bad old days of laissez-faire,
When pussies drowned through lack
of care,
Are gone beyond recall ;
Now National Health, hygienic food
Protect the teeming multitude,
And fun is had by all. . . . "*

*One night, incensed beyond control
By finny frolics in the bowl,
Puss pounced and caused a short ;
No longer from the fish divorced,
In Hiroshimic holocaust
She set his words at naught.*

—RONALD HINGLEY



John Topham

SPRING

Greenhithe, whose parish church is now restored after war damage, is one of those Kentish names breathing the spirit of the new season. Here, upon a spring tide, many a stalwart ship enjoys her first taste of the elements.



A. C. K. Ware

SUMMER

At High Wycombe, in Buckinghamshire, the August richness of the harvest is caught at its mellow peak. The cornfields of the home counties yield their tribute despite the farmers' grimmest forebodings.



AUTUMN

In Colchester Arms Park, which lies under the shadow of the Roman fortress, the leaves linger on the protecting slope. Above is the castle, with its ancient memories: below is the cricket ground, scene of happier battles.



WINTER

The nightingales of Lincoln's Inn have forgotten all they knew of London. Now only the sparrows, and the students, recall the greenery which in summer shades the comings and goings of man upon his lawful occasions.



MRS. PETERS THOUGHT PARIS PALPITATING

By Alex. Potter

PARIS 100 years ago. Napoleon III. has been Emperor of the French for two years. The Crimean War, now on the threshold of its second year, has brought Britain and France closely together. There is a substantial British colony in Paris, and a contingent of British visitors for Christmas, including Mr. Algernon Peters, a London banker (who went mainly on business), his wife Rosa, and Henry and Charlotte, their grown-up children. Mrs. Peters has just written to a cousin in England.

226 bis, Rue de Rivoli, Paris.
Christmas Eve, 1854.

MY DEAR CHRISTINA,
We have all been sleeping after listening to Charlotte reading from a French book, though we understood nothing of what she uttered.

We like this apartment, which friends of Algernon have loaned us while they are in London. All eight rooms have fires, and there are also heating pipes. The apartment looks over the Tuilleries Gardens, where many fashionable people walk in the afternoons, and in which this morning I observed, from my window, some of the gaudily dressed Zouaves who have just arrived in Paris. They have long mantles over their

uniforms and turbans on their heads, and one was preening himself in the gaze of the nursemaid of friends of ours.

We love Paris (I think it is quite palpitating) and intend to enjoy ourselves, though we are constantly thinking of our dear soldiers in the Crimea, for whom, with you, we worked well in London. You know of Algernon's benefactions there. Here he has given 100 guineas to a charity which is sending tobacco to the soldiers. I am helping in a ball the English people here are giving next month. We buy tickets for the many lotteries now being arranged to help the soldiers.



MALLET

Henry talks of volunteering for the Army, and Charlotte wants to be a nurse, but we consider both too young for such ventures.

We have done a great amount of visiting, and are being entertained almost daily. There is something about the people and the streets of Paris which I fail to notice in London; a sprightliness and vivacity and colour. It is not my impression that the French are a frivolous people. We find them friendly and obliging. The men are extremely civil and complimentary, and many appear romantic. The women dress smartly, walk well, and generally are elegant.

I have bought a dinner dress in green terry velvet trimmed with flounces in *point d'Angleterre*. I have also purchased a bonnet of white imperial velvet, with a plain front, a bunch of mulberries with crape leaves on one side, and a bow, with cerise velvet leaves, on the other. For Charlotte, her father purchased a cloak in silk velvet, and a muff in French marten. I never saw such splendid muffs as those carried in Paris.

I am surprised by the number of people in the streets, but these are nothing, it is said, to the crowds seen out of doors in summer. There is more fraternising in Paris than in London. The shops are well stocked, many with dainty trifles. One employs a man to keep the crowds in order. Algernon says no city in the world has so many foreigners among its guests. They enjoy numerous distractions here.

WE have visited the Zoo, called the *Jardin des Plantes*, where recent arrivals include tigers, hyenas, jackals and a young male elephant which has fallen in love with a middle-aged elephantess of long residence.

The food in Paris is excellent, both in its nature and preparation, and one result of our visit is that Algernon will engage a French *chef* for our London house, and enlarge the wine cellar. It is possible to buy plum puddings here, though one establishment announces them as "plumpoodings."

I must also mention the gorgeous chariots seen in the Champs-Élysées; the picturesque bridges over the Seine; the broad pavements; the splendid statues and fountains; the spacious avenues running from the Arc de Triomphe; the city's many trees; the tempting millinery; the wine-drinking and coffee-drinking; the wine shops with painted vines on the walls, and gilded railings, and some with small gardens; the bread-women, the milk-women; the liking, among women, for knitting; and the *gamins*, or street arabs.



"... It is guaranteed to give 'a graceful turn to the whiskers and moustache'"

The art galleries are magnificent, and too numerous to be visited with care. I took Henry and Charlotte to the Latin Quarter, where the young men have all manner of hair styles. Some had ringlets hanging over their shoulders; others had beards; and a weirder collection of caps I never saw.

New boulevards and streets are being made, and many important edifices are being erected. Large parts of the city are to be completely transformed.

Last night we entertained Mr. Harold Fothergill, a very affable man, from the British Embassy. He had recently travelled near Marseilles in a diligence, and told of putting a highwayman to flight. He also informed us that a wolf, weighing 165 lb., was last week shot in Rambouillet Forest, only 30 miles from Paris.

Mr. Fothergill amused Charlotte by reading to her an advertisement in *Galigani's Messenger*, an English newspaper sold in Paris. The advertisement said that a young French nobleman, being in reduced circumstances, was desirous of giving lessons in the French language, and that he had undeniable references. Charlotte would like to meet this nobleman, but Algernon and Mr. Fothergill agreed that I should meet him first, which I am arranging to do.

Mr. Fothergill wrote for Henry the address of a French engineer who gives lessons in

photography. To Charlotte he gave the address of a reliable dancing academy.

Mr. Fothergill has promised to accompany us in our carriage next week to the top of the hill of Montmartre, from which excellent views of the land around Paris, and of many windmills, can be obtained. He will take a wonderful new telescope made in Paris.

I am glad we brought the carriage and horses, which travelled comfortably in the ship. The tariffs for which you ask, for the journey from London to Paris (which takes sixteen hours, with only three hours on the sea), are: Four-wheeled carriages, £3; two-wheeled carriages, 30s.; horses, £2; dogs, 5s. No fees need be paid to stewards.

More railways are being made in France, and I suspect Algernon is materially interested in some of them.

THE traffic in Paris is occasionally very heavy; and no wonder, for (according to Mr. Fothergill) the city has 3000 cabriolets and fiacres for hire, and 1000 chariots are owned by the upper classes.

The day after to-morrow the Emperor Napoleon will open the Legislative Session for 1855 to the firing of guns. We have seen the new Imperial Guard in the Champs-Élysées, and hear that Lord and Lady Palmerston watched it recently.

Charlotte, after reading this letter, reminds me of two anecdotes told by Mr. Fothergill. He related that a shop in the Rue de la Paix is showing a pomade for the Allied Armies in the Crimea. It is guaranteed to give "a graceful turn to the whiskers and moustache," but Mr. Fothergill said: "Considering that life and death are in the balance, I do not think it at all likely that our gallant soldiers will trouble themselves about the mere turning of a hair."

Mr. Fothergill also told the following: A musical version of a play by Shakespeare was recently given at the Opéra-Comique, the singer Jourdan taking a part. Monsieur Jourdan had given a ticket for the performance to a servant girl he recently engaged from Normandy. When the singer appeared to be in danger during a duel in the play, and the audience was silent and enthralled, the servant girl shouted to his opponent: "Oh, please do not kill my master!"

With that, my dear Christina, I conclude this letter, and, as Christmas will have passed when you receive this, I send our warm wishes for a happy New Year.

Your affectionate cousin,
ROSA.

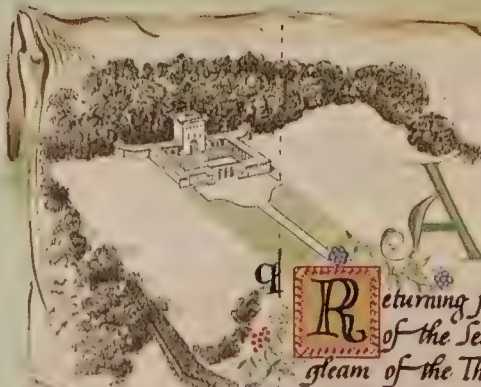


"... the art galleries are magnificent, and too numerous to be visited with care"



RUNNYMEDE MEMORIAL

ON certain occasions, and for rare events, Britons have risen with the spirit of poets to commemorate their brothers. The cloister at Runnymede is such a gesture. Here are recorded the names of those flying men, our flesh and blood, who have no known grave. We who live on the peace for which they died may wish to give proof of our pride in them by considering the work of the R.A.F. Benevolent Fund



A Wooded hill

The odds were great:
Our margins small;
The stakes infinite.

Returning from operational missions in the dusk or the dawn, countless airmen of the Second World War saw below their wing-tips the faint and silvered gleam of the Thames, a wooded hill and a green meadow, and wearily yet gladly were aware of homecoming. The hill is called *Cooper's Hill*, and the meadow over which it looks has its centuries' old fame as *Runnymede*...

On *Cooper's Hill* to day, this October afternoon when the War is more than eight years past, there is unveiled by the *QUEEN*, in the presence of a great and distinguished concourse, a memorial to more than 20,000 members of the Air Forces of the Commonwealth who died in operations over Britain and N.W. Europe and have no known grave. † † †



TON ANOTHER, SMALLER MEMORIAL IN REMOTE KOHIMA, ON THE ASSAM-BURMA BORDER, THERE ARE INSCRIBED A FEW WORDS WHICH ARE ESPECIALLY APPLICABLE TO THIS MEMORIAL, AND THIS CEREMONY: "FOR YOUR TO-MORROW WE GAVE OUR TO-DAY."

HERE is that to-morrow, earned by courage and endurance, and sanctified by sacrifice. The hill, the meadow and the river, the little villages and towns of all the smiling valley, are at peace now—a peace bought by the valour of those whose names are inscribed upon this memorial. † † †

They came not home—from a long fighter patrol over the Channel or the North Sea, from a grim Bomber Command mission into the heart of Germany.

Day after day, night after night, for nearly six years their battle endured. Few, indeed, of those who were in it at the outset survived to see its culmination, its victory and its vindication, and most of those few were scarred by their ordeal, grounded and deskbound.



YET the tradition of the R.A.F. and of all its sister Forces from the rest of the Commonwealth was sustained from the first day to the last; and it was strangely ironic that, while the back-to-the wall days of 1940 had their joy and their zest, the days of overwhelming triumph were deeply tinged with sadness, sadness for the youth and the beauty that were lost.

Now it is all remembered history. The hymn peals out in the still bright air; and as the bugle proclaims the salute of the living to the dead, joy and grief are mingled and the last, clear, undying note adverts the simple, stern truth that this is a story without end... Yesterday passes the torch to to-morrow and another young generation looks eagerly to the skies to find new adventures new endeavours, new duties.

TO THE GLORY OF GOD for World Peace

Illustrated & Scried by E.W. Hugh White, Flight Lieutenant 83902 November 11th

RAF VR (CTD. AM. OPERATIONAL 1939/45)

1953
AD



THE QUEEN'S RETURN

ON the evening of May 14, 1954, H.M. the Queen entered home waters after her triumphal Coronation Commonwealth Tour. Before the Isle of Wight was reached all vessels of the Home Fleet escort closed in to the Royal Yacht at speed. As each vessel passed Britannia the ship's companies manned the rails



ABOARD H.M.S. Apollo (Captain Charles Coke, R.N.), Francis Russell Flint, commissioned by The TATLER, made copious notes and sketches of the incident. The artist was granted special Admiralty permission to be present. He is a Lt.-Cdr. R.N.V.R. (Rtd.), having served with the Navy throughout the war, and was an A.D.C. to Sir Winston Churchill, when he landed in France after D-day

Water Colour by Francis Russell Flint, R.O.I., S.M.A.

B R I T A N N I A

THEATRE

FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE HOXTON

HULINES



OBSERVE THE DATE



WONDROUS IMPROVEMENT IN SKIPPING.



MATHEW LITH

17 CASTLE ST HOLBORN ST

WEDNESDAY 21 FEBRUARY.



THE GREATEST ACT I EVER SAW

EACH year either my brother, Cyril, or I scour the world in an endeavour to discover and bring to the British public the world's greatest acts, but to state categorically what I consider to be the greatest—what a task, and, of course, tastes differ.

Firstly, I ask myself, what makes a great act? Presentation, personality, rhythm, timing, excitement, daring—all these play their part in the make-up, so obviously the greatest must be the one that possesses all these attributes—plus that little bit of indefinable "something" that the others haven't got—and which is so obvious in the act *The Flying de Riaz* perform.

How (in 1948) we managed to find them and, despite American offers, bring them to England, is a story in itself and cannot be told here; the fact remains they came and took the country by storm, and it is now no secret that we have booked them for a return visit to Olympia this winter, which is a thing we rarely do and then only in the case of outstanding acts.

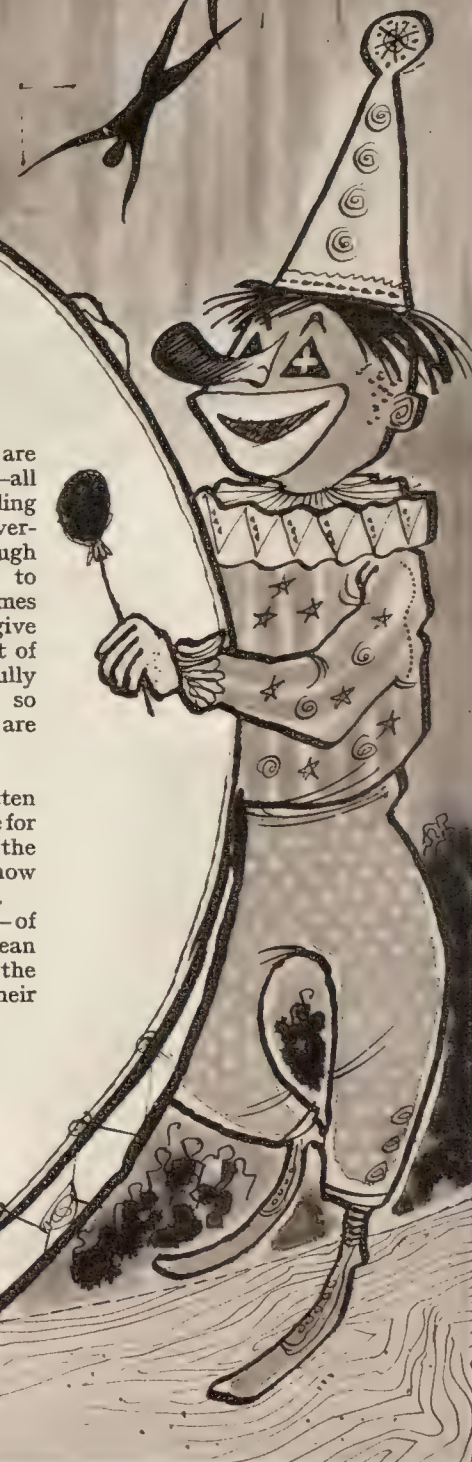
The "ingredients" of the act are two men, one girl, one aeroplane—all perfect! And to see them hurtling around the Big Top is a never-to-be-forgotten thrill, and although the aerial tricks performed are, to say the least of it, at all times sensational, the artistes never give the impression of being in any sort of danger, so strong and beautifully made is their equipment and so confident and quietly efficient are they themselves.

A LOT of nonsense has been written about the public's ghoulish taste for thrill and excitement coupled with the desire to witness an accident, but I know this theory to be absolutely untrue.

The public like being thrilled—of course they do—but that does not mean they like being frightened, and in the case of *The Flying de Riaz* it is their ability to hand out breath-taking thrills to an unworried, unscared audience, that puts them ahead of the other great acts and makes them the "Greatest of all."

—Bernard N. Mills

DAVID JUDD





This snuff-box of enamelled gold, set with miniature portraits of the King and Queen in diamond frames, was given by Queen Mary to King George V. at Christmas, 1913. It is in the exhibition of Queen Mary's art treasures at the Victoria and Albert Museum, as are the other gifts illustrated on these pages

BY THESE PRESENTS . . .

SINCE long before the birth of Our Saviour, the peoples of Europe and the Near East had celebrated the Winter Festival. Some of the curious folk-customs associated with the pre-Christian "Christmas" have been forgotten, but some of them have survived in more or less unaltered form. "Dressing-up" with us is now confined to the wearing of paper "party-hats"—where the Romans used to masquerade in the skins of wild beasts.



A late eighteenth-century étui of jasper, mounted with gold, probably made as a Royal present for an Eastern potentate

BUT one custom associated with the pre-Christian winter rejoicings which has remained with us is the giving of presents; and the very word used by the modern French—*étrennes*—is the hardly altered name that the Romans gave to their New Year presents: *strenæ*.

Indeed, so intimately connected was present-giving with the old pagan winter festival that, in the earliest days of Christianity, the Church was inclined to frown upon present-giving, and upon such customs as "dressing-up," as savouring too much of paganism. Christians of the stricter sort, unwilling to condone even the more innocent of pagan customs, used studiously to refrain from giving anything

at Christmas than the "kiss of peace"—and that usually at the church door!

But it could be argued that the very first Christmastide of all had sanctified the old pagan custom of present-giving, when Our Saviour Himself had accepted the gifts that the Three Wise Men had brought for His honour.

Among the Romans, little images of baked clay were the most popular "general" present, as Christmas-cards are amongst us; though for their friends the Romans reserved more costly presents, as we do.

It may be doubted that any more magnificent gift was ever given at Christmas than the crown that, literally and metaphorically, Pope Leo III. bestowed on the Emperor

Charlemagne, in a ceremony of unparalleled splendour; and for centuries thereafter, the most wonderful of Christmas presents were those that kings reserved for popes, and popes for kings.

A curious Christmas present, more valuable by reason of its associations than because of its intrinsic worth—though it was wonderfully worked in gold and silver thread—was the Battle Standard of England, captured by the Normans at Hastings. Since William the Conqueror had asked the Pope's blessing on his enterprise, he felt that the sending of the Banner to Rome would be the best way of marking his sense of obligation to His Holiness; and, accordingly, in time to deliver the Banner at Rome by Christmas Day 1067, two messengers set forth with the last relic of Saxon rule in England.

ALL traces of this Banner have vanished; which is a pity in that it was worked by the only Russian lady ever to have been a Queen of England: its design was probably even more Byzantine than Queen Matilda's Bayeux tapestry.

We have few records of the presents that the lesser folk gave to each other in those far-off times: only the details of royal and ecclesiastical gifts have survived. For instance, the Emperor Constantine Monomachus, sending best wishes to his tributary, the King of Hungary, at Christmas 1100, could think of no more pleasing token of his regard than a gold-plated hat, called, in those days, a *stemma*. The remains of this hat were dug up, about a century ago, in a field in Hungary; and were to be seen, at least until the beginning of the late war, in the museum at Pesth. This hat was literally gold-plated, since six round-topped gold plates, ornamented with cloisonné enamel, and linked together with hooks and rings, surrounded the crown of the hat, while smaller plates covered the brim.

UNTIL the Reformation, a very high price was put upon relics; and the shrines in which the better-known relics were housed were, as Chaucer has reminded us, places to which thousands of pilgrims thronged.

Accounted a pious work, princes and wealthy merchants poured out gifts upon the shrines of their favourite saints; and Christmas-time was the period at which most gifts were made.

But, with the coming of the Reformation, the religious element in the costly gift tends to disappear, and even before the Reformation the tendency can be detected. When Pope Julius wished to send a Christmas present to King Henry VIII.—recently named by that same Pope, "Defender of the Faith"—His Holiness sent two beautifully engraved swords in jewelled scabbards, where, a hundred or even fifty years earlier, the gift would have been a jewelled cross or reliquary.

The learned but eccentric Sir Kenelm Digby—son of that Sir Everard Digby who was executed for his complicity in the Gunpowder Plot—gave his wife, Venetia, a Christmas present which was decidedly as queer as the oddity who conceived it.

Kenelm Digby was an accomplished scholar and an able man-of-the-world, but he was soaked in the extravagant beliefs of the alchemists.

Perhaps, then, it is not astonishing to read that the present that he gave to his wife, the lovely Lady Venetia Anastasia Stanley, had more than a slightly alchemical flavour about it.

This was a dish of capons, fed exclusively upon vipers, according to the recipe supposed to have been left to posterity by the famed alchemist, Arnold de Villeneuve. The alchemy-besotted knight believed—or, maybe, only hoped!—that he was ensuring his wife undiminished loveliness for a century to come.

MORE sensible was a Christmas present given by a contemporary of Sir Kenelm's—Prince Charles—to his father, King James I. Offered a set of cartoons by the great Raphael for the trivial sum of £300, the Prince snapped them up, presented them to his father, and bequeathed to future kings of Great Britain one of the rarest of our Royal treasures.

The Lord Protector had less romantic ideas about Christmas presents. His grim

Queen as a Christmas present, and sent her to sea, heavily armed, to take on the French!

George IV., when Prince of Wales, revived some of the earlier ideas of magnificence, which had tended to go out with the eighteenth century, though, when considering superb Christmas presents, we should not overlook the wonderful Palace of Blenheim and the £500,000 to support it which were voted, in time to be considered a Christmas present, by a Parliament eager to reward the brilliant (if unprofitable) generalship of John Churchill, first Duke of Marlborough.

The Prince of Wales's taste, always sound artistically, soon shrugged off the earlier influences of Dashwood and Wilkes and Fox, and the Hell-Fire Club set. But the Prince's good taste was always allied with magnificence, and splendid were the presents that he bestowed on his lady friends: in particular the plumed diamond tiara that he gave to Perdita Robinson, and for which he had such difficulty in paying.

AS extravagant, but of far worse taste, was the eccentric millionaire-writer-architect, William Beckford of Fonthill, who tore down his ancestral home—he had been left, while still a boy, an income of over £40,000 a year—to build himself a fantastic "Gothic" abbey in time to give his friends and tenants a Christmas dinner of unprecedented splendour and oddity.

The great central tower of Fonthill Abbey, over 200 ft. high, crashed through the vast, groined banqueting hall only after all the guests were safely away. No one was killed, and when Beckford was hastily summoned to see the collapse of his "folly," he merely shrugged his shoulders.

Public opinion has turned against ostentation in giving. Only occasionally from Hollywood do we catch a faint, subdued, but still authentic note of the old vulgarity which so shames our own precise good form.

The last "baroque" gift that I can remember on the highest level was the sack of walnuts, each having its kernel replaced by a gold coin, which was sent as a present to Pope Leo XIII., in his old age; though the Rolls-Royce made to the order of an Indian Maharajah in 1916 deserves inclusion in the list of "baroque" gifts. (In this case, it was His Highness's gift to himself.) "By pressing a button on the dashboard," runs the description, "the chauffeur can cause the swan to hiss in the most realistic manner!"

Yet—and this is the last example of the unusual among Christmas presents—originality need not go with ostentation. When they asked King Henry IV. of France and Navarre what he would command to be given to him, he picked up the beautiful Venetian glass goblet from which the no less lovely Gabrielle d'Estrees had just drunk, and turned to the lackey standing behind his chair.

"Keep this glass. It is my own . . . to toast my friends in."



Typical of an early nineteenth-century Royal gift is this tortoiseshell snuff-box with gold lid and gold portrait medallion of George IV. as Prince of Wales

Parliament abolished the Feast, and ordered the shops to open up, as though December 25th were an ordinary week-day; but His Highness was prepared—though only in a severely practical way—to conform to older ideas, for the sake of his friends. Cromwell's Secretary of State (and son-in-law), Thurloe, got the very nicest Christmas present in 1655: the highly profitable Postmastership, at the small price of £10,000.

CROMWELL'S successor as ruler of Britain, Charles II., had some pleasing ideas on what constituted Christmas presents. Pretty Nell Gwynn one year got a solid silver bedroom—bedstead, chairs, toilet-table, toilet-glass, candlesticks, and so on. The bill is still extant.

For his wife, the Infanta Catherine of Braganza, the Merry Monarch chose something a little more practical. Mr. Anthony Deane, the shipbuilder of Deptford, was commissioned to design a yacht for the purpose of taking the Queen and her ladies up and down the river. Mr. Deane did something more than his well-respected best, and the *Saudades*—which is Portuguese for "Good luck!"—proved so swift and seaworthy that, three years afterwards, the King forgot that he had given her to the



Musical box (compared with a sixpence) in the form of a miniature crown, given to Queen Mary by Princess Beatrice

Oh, Christmas...

Isn't it lovely? — Christmas again!! Dear, exciting, jolly old Christmas with all its attendant thrills.....



The days of preparation...



..... The mounting excitement of the children



..... The great day itself! The delighted shouts of the little ones as they proudly display their gifts — bless them, it's only 4.30 a.m.....



The family breakfast, for once without newspapers...



The Christmas dinner and the resolution not to over-eat...



The dyspepsia as a result of over-eating.....



The washing-up.....!!



And soon — because Christmas is a time for the children — the little friends arrive. The children's party! — oh, SUCH noise and excitement....



The washing-up... !!



..... and so to the end of another jolly Christmas Day.....



Ah, Christmas !!!



Oh, Christmas !!!!

Johnson

ON BEING SENT OUT OF THE ROOM

• Paul Holt •



David Judd

"That horrible example . . . known as Postman's Knock"

THE danger-point of any Christmas gathering comes when, the company becoming bored with their own company, somebody suggests Games.

This can become rougher than an assault landing, more boring than reading Kinsey, more embarrassing than watching a TV comic.

I have here a set of rules, or palliatives, to keep hysteria at bay; each rule guaranteed different and applicable only to the game for which it is designed.

General Rule: Always arrange, beforehand, to have a bottle and at least two glasses cached in a darkened room some distance from the seat of the party. I have found that the smallest room in the house, to the left of the front door, will serve best; where they keep walking-sticks, the child's bicycle, mackintoshes, old copies of *Horse and Hound*, broken fishing-rods and a box like a coffin, in which are croquet implements. Put your bottle in the croquet box.

We start with Erotic Games. For instance, that horrible example of chain-reaction lechery known as Postman's Knock. In this one *arrange to be sent out of the room first*. (Delay won't help you a bit.) Have a quick nip from the croquet box and return, announcing that you have a message for the largest, bulgiest, tulle-up, vacuous, vain lump of maidenhood in sight. On getting her outside tell her at once an incident from the wedding ritual of the lion-hunting Masai tribe of Northern Kenya. This should so intrigue her that she will return to the room in a very pretty fluster and your work has ample advertisement to precede you. Have a quick nip from the croquet box and follow, looking innocent.

INTELLECTUAL games come next.

I am Thinking of a Historical Character is the safest one.

When your turn comes, elect for the letter C. Everybody will try to make you admit you are thinking of Caractacus or Charlemagne, and when you get bored by their silly erudition you may admit to any one you please. Nobody will ever know you were thinking of croquet box all the time.

By now it will have been some time since you were sent out of the room *on your own*, and so you must quickly jump in with the suggestion of Telepathy.

Now, Telepathy is a jolly good game. First of all you are sent out while the rest of the company thinks of an object in the room. This you have to guess on your return without a word being said. While everybody is busy flexing their fluences, sending out thought waves and generally puffing themselves up with thoughts of their own psychic vitality (a cherished indoor sport), you will already have put the object into their minds before you left the room. For if you do it with sufficient delicacy they are bound to pick on *the object you last touched*. ("He'll never think of that!" they cry). So make a little play of seeing that your glass is placed behind something. You can even go so far as to say, "Will it be safe there?" and tuck it behind that horrid black marble clock with the exposed stomach on the mantelshelf.

Have a quick nip from the croquet box and return when called.

Now creep about the room like Private Schine in search of a commission. Stop. Reach out your hand. Hesitate. Then smile regretfully and pass on. As you approach the mantelshelf pass quickly by, then pause, puzzled. The poor dears will be getting so vital by now you could run the outside power unit on their thought waves. Stretch out your hand like a water diviner, touch the clock. Then seize the glass triumphantly. Bless them all, they were so vital they drove you to the choice.

And you've had two drinks to their none.

Now we come to the beastly games.

The one called Situations is bound to be suggested. If you were stranded for twenty-four hours at an airport, what would you do? Or locked for the week-end in the British Museum, what would you read?

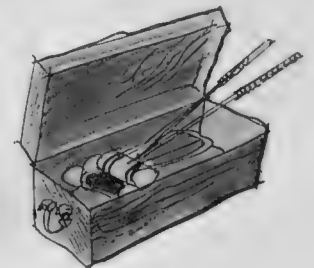
I find myself content to say, "I'd go to Rosa Lewis's place and catch up on Nancy Mitford," as I leave the room for a quick croquet at the box nip.

Pedigrees is more or less the same. Invent imaginary or fictitious ancestors and background for a quest. You just say, "By Don Quixote out of Little Miss Muffet," and leave the rest to guess whom you mean. Here I have no hesitation at all in saying:

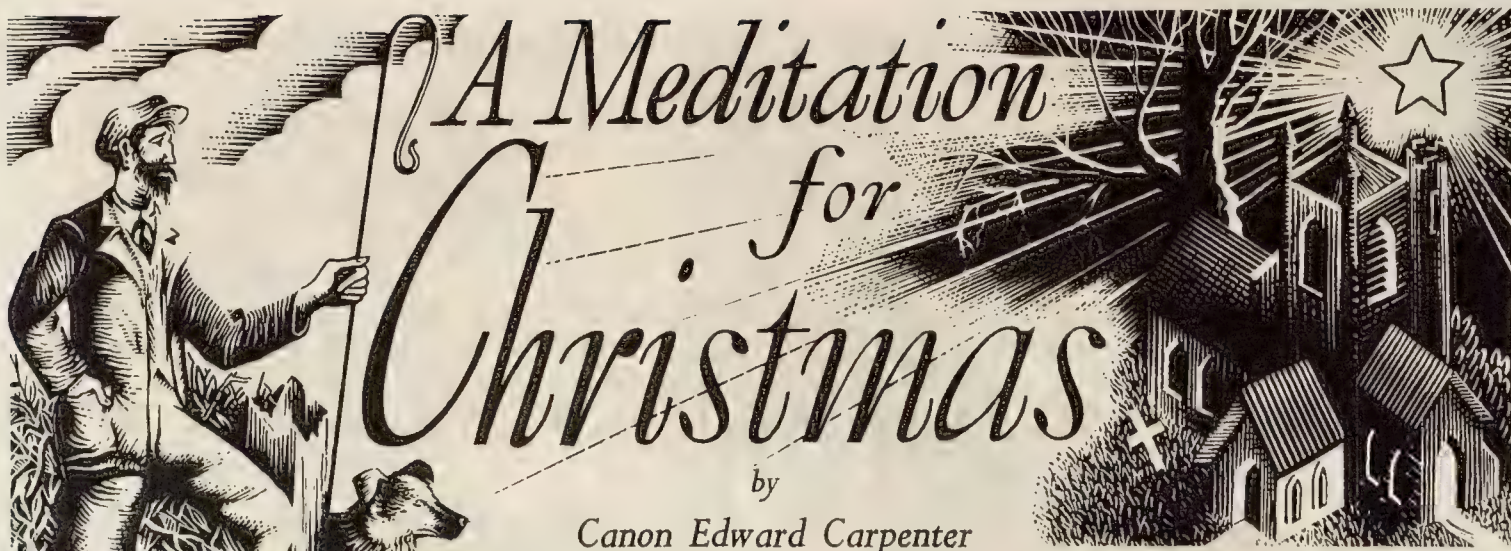
"By Little Lord Fauntleroy out of Ondine" (which, of course, is impossible), and leave them wrangling while I take a nip croquet at the quick box.

Returning, pause outside, for you may hear somebody saying: "Isn't it splendid how he's *joining in* so well to-night. I've never seen him in such a good mood. And, you know, he's hardly had a drink. . . ."

Good old Croquet Box.







PREPARING for Christmas is an energetic business.

There are an hundred and one things to do, and no matter how much we made up our minds that this year we would plan everything well in advance, it doesn't seem to have made much difference!

Yet we would all admit that our frantic efforts to be ready in time are finally worth while. In our hearts we wouldn't be without Christmas for the world. Of course we excuse our shyness by explaining that it means so

much to the children, but we know that in fact it means just as much to ourselves, even if it does leave us a little exhausted afterwards.

If we were pressed to say more precisely, however, why Christmas is so worth while, I wonder what our answer would be? Perhaps we might reply that it gives us all a much-needed break, a "let up" in a rather grim world, which enables us to go back to the grind again somewhat refreshed. Maybe this was the mood of a leader-writer who some years ago headed his article on the day after Boxing Day: "Back to Reality."

YES! I think some of us are tempted to regard Christmas as an imaginative escape from the hard realities of life: as a safety valve when we can let ourselves go, thereby entering into a charity which it would be dangerous to indulge in all the year round. It's all right over Christmas, we say in self-defence, but it would never do in the more normal routine.

Such a mood is, I think, quite understandable, especially

against the harsh background of 1954, but it constitutes a dangerous misunderstanding of the heart of the Christmas message. The moment we think of Christmas as nothing more than a colourful story, as an escape from everyday reality, we are losing hold on its essential meaning and significance. The most important thing about Christmas is that it really happened. In a grim world of refugees and power politics, a baby really was born, whose entry upon the human scene is the most significant event that ever occurred.

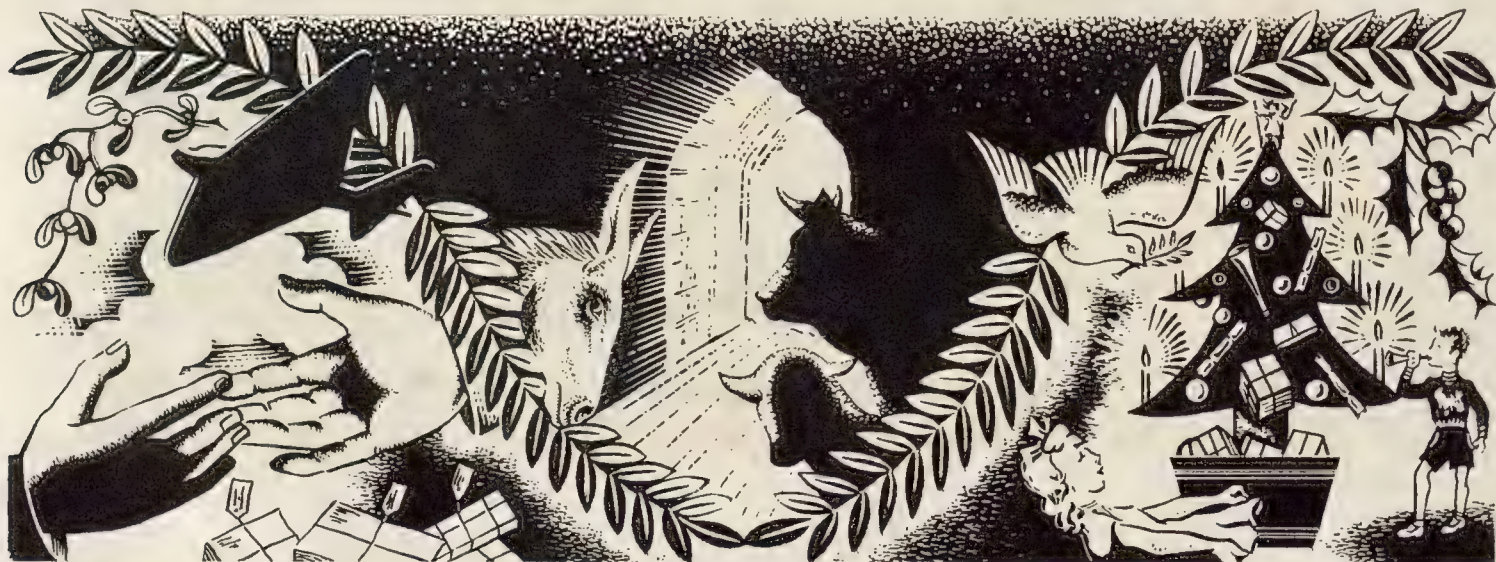
IN the birth of this baby, and the life that followed, the power and the loving purpose of the great God Himself are shown forth. Our carols and our parties, the giving of ourselves to a greater charity—such age-long expressions of the Christmas Spirit are not escapes to make life bearable: rather they are the very stuff which go to make up real existence. We are not less but more ourselves when we enter into the spirit of this season. It is the hard, respectable person that we all too often show ourselves to be which is finally unreal.

BECAUSE we try to push Christmas into a fairy world, because we are tempted to think love sentimental and charity a weakness that we impoverish life and create the very frustrations from which we try in vain to rescue ourselves. The converted Scrooge was the real Scrooge. To be childlike (though not childish), to find joy in simple things, and to see them as coming to us out of the Great Heart of the Eternal God—this is to enter into life and to understand Christmas.

Thomas Hardy once wrote beautifully, if sadly:

*So fair a fancy few would weave In these years. Yet I feel
If someone said on Christmas Eve "Come: see the oxen kneel
"In the lonely barton by yonder coomb Our childhood used to know"
I should go with him in the gloom, Hoping it might be so.*

The Christian conviction remains that it is!





Copyright 1930 by Franz Hanjstaengl, Munich

THE MADONNA OF LUCCA, one of the two great religious masterpieces of the Flemish artist Jan Van Eyck, is now in the Frankfurt collection, having escaped war damage. *The Adoration Of The Lamb*, which he completed after his elder brother's death, is at Bruges where the main Van Eyck collection is permanently displayed. The reproduction is by the courtesy of the Pallas Gallery, London



The Remarkable Tale Of Jennifer Jane



*THIS is the story of Jennifer Jane,
Mousey, myopic, prodigiously plain;
Not a supporter of Johann S.,
Spectacled, scraping unwillingness;
Little and lonely and lost and wavering,
Fidgeting, crotcheting, semi-quavering;
Harassed and hopeless and hideously
Out of accord with Sebastian B;
Fingers all fumbling to fasten on
Bach and Beethoven and Mendelssohn.*

*This is the story of Jennifer J.,
Painfully, ploddingly learning to play;
Scared . . . since she's never eluded yet
Sisters Amelia and Antoinette,
Stealthily, silently gliding by,
Ear an accomplice to gimlet eye;
Noses twain in one single sense
Fused for corroborative evidence;
Most mathematical mind to mark
Jane as she mutilates Johann Bach. . . .*

JANE'S now "Janice" . . . and
she's twenty-three,
Sings at Sambo's . . . and is still off key;
Name illumined in electric lights,
Prances through her stardom in vermillion
lights.

Hair's unstraightened in the newest style,
Dental service sponsors dazzling smile;
Specs surrendered . . . oh, she's up to
date—
Claims her contact lenses from the Welfare
State.

STARTS a fashion with each fur and frock,
Sinks her savings in some gilt-edged stock;
Mewed in Mayfair in a modest way,
Recommends the 'cello . . . if a girl must play.

—JEAN STANGER





1837.

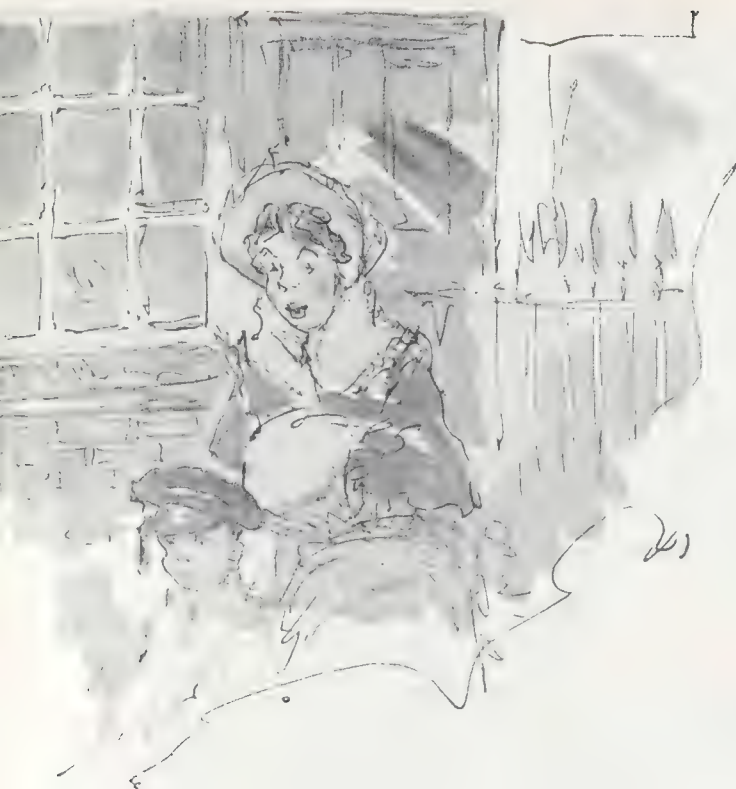


THE DICKENS LEGEND

• Nancy Spain •

CHARLES DICKENS—Christmas—the words are synonymous. In his lifetime this giant among journalists and novelists let loose a demand for the Christmas spirit that even he was unable to control.

When he was rising thirty, having paid off his father's debts and starting to make a name for himself, we find him providing a Christmas party for six poor travellers of Rochester:



"Myself with the Pitcher

Ben with Beer

Inattentive Boy with Hot Plates

Inattentive Boy with Hot Plates

THE TURKEY

Female carrying sauces to be heated on the spot

THE BEEF

Man with tray on his head, containing
vegetables and sundries.

Volunteer Hostler from Hotel, grinning and
rendering no assistance.

As we passed along the High Street, comet-like,
we left a long trail of fragrance behind us, which
caused the public to stop and wonder. . . . I never
saw a finer turkey, finer beef, or greater prodigality
of sauce or gravy; and my Travellers did wonderful
justice to everything set before them."

When he was married, he behaved at Christmas
very like the Young Father in his own
A Christmas Carol:

"The scaling him with chairs for ladders to
dive into his pockets, despoil him of brown
paper parcels, hold on tight by his cravat, hug
him round his neck, pommel his back, and
kicking his legs in inexpressible affection."

But in his agonized, lionized middle age, when
Mrs. Dickens had left him and Kate Ternan and
her mother had moved in on him, he was almost
destroyed by the legend he had created. Every
year he was expected to write a Christmas Book
for his loyal public of the same inspirational force
as *A Christmas Carol*. Every year it grew harder.

To understand Dickens's early passion for the
Christmas message, his pleasure in awakening
"some long and forbearing thoughts, never
out of season in a Christian land," it is important
to go back to the empty years of childhood, to
the sad Sundays spent at the Marshalsea Prison,
to the miserable weekdays in the blacking ware-
house on Old Hungerford Stairs. Is it any wonder
that when he made money he spent it—not in
cautious investment, as the rich do—but in riot
and fun and feasting as the poor used to?

In 1837 Dickens was still irresponsible enough to
arrive home at Christmas "dead drunk and was
put to bed by my loving missis." By 1843 he was
the very model of *Punch's* Paterfamilias. He had
ten children, he adored them all. So he bought
"the stock in trade of a conjurer" and in his usual
spirit of benevolent exhibitionism he exulted "if you
could see me conjuring the company's watches . . .
and causing pieces of money to fly . . . and burning
pocket handkerchiefs without hurting 'em." And his
friends sent him sublime turkeys and he wrote

and thanked them. "The last remnant of that
blessed bird made its appearance at breakfast
yesterday. The other portions had furnished forth
seven grills, one boil and a cold lunch or two."

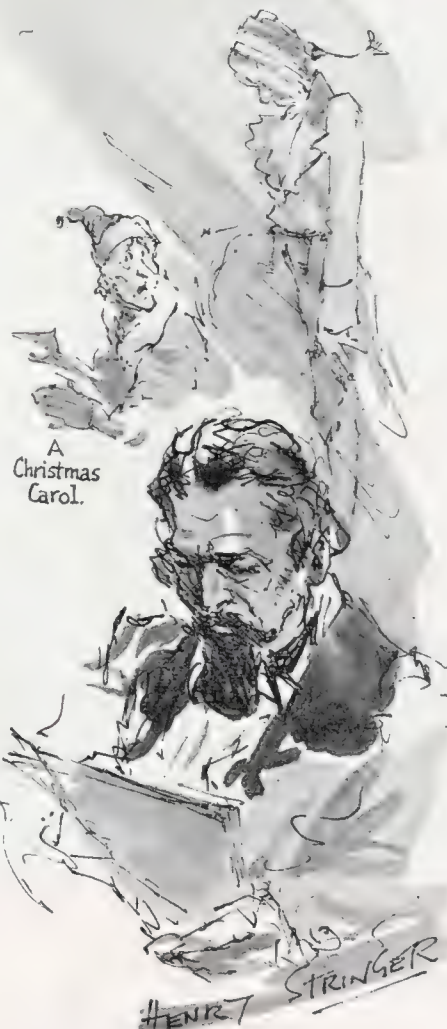
These were the years of the "shining" parties,
remembered with tears by Thackeray's daughter:
parties that "seemed to go round and round,"
when small boys threw their arms and legs in the
air, when Dickens persuaded a little girl to sing in
the supper room, when everyone gave three cheers
for Thackeray, who stood blinking on the staircase.
These were the years of lavish private theatricals
with the Editor of *Punch* as the Giantess Glumdalca
in Fielding's *Tom Thumb*, with foot races and
rustic sports outside among the snow. Oh yes.
And every dinner began with a "glass of Chichester
milk punch" and ended with a "dish of toasted
cheese." "No man" commented a pompous critic
of Mrs. Dickens's cookery book *What Shall We
Have For Dinner?* "could possibly survive the con-
sumption of such frequent toasted cheese."

Yes, Christmas with Mr. and Mrs. Dickens was
a model of jollity: so much so that there was
joy and love to spare for the rest of humanity.
It was in such a state of pure inspiration, on a foggy
October evening in Manchester, that Dickens sat
down and wrote *A Christmas Carol*.

With *A Christmas Carol* Dickens created the
legendary mid-Victorian Christmas. With it, too,
he created a demand that he fought, year after
year, to supply. *The Chimes*, *The Haunted Man*, *The
Cricket On The Hearth*, each Christmas Book grew
harder to write. By 1846 we find him in despair: "I
fear there may be no Christmas Book this year."
And on Christmas Day itself "Everybody is laid up
with the Influenza except all the disagreeable
people." Two years later he was talking of "grind-
ing out" his Christmas Book, and in the sixties,
doleful with gout, miserable with "American"
catarrh he had even stopped celebrating Christmas.
He spent Christmas Day 1864 miserably sneezing
in a railway train on his way to New York.

Dickens had only six more Christmases—
Christmases in the midst of heartbreaking
lecture tours, financial worries, complications
unending. He died in June, 1870, with *Edwin Drood*
maddeningly unfinished.

The last years, the tragic years, the years that
turned a pleasure into a toil, are best forgotten. I
prefer to believe that in Dickens's heart, as for the
rest of us, there will always be mistletoe in the
rafters and ice on the pond at Dingley Dell, with
Sam Weller waiting to "display that beautiful feat
of fancy sliding 'knocking at the cobbler's door.'"



A
Christmas
Carol.

HENRY STRINGER.

Continuing from page 11—

SPEAK TO THE WIND

never bother to meet that day. They know never a fox this side of the country but goes to the funeral."

"That's why there's that fox over the door. Didn't you *know*?" And when Renarte had gone: "Ignorant" the kitchen maid said, and wriggled her shoulders.

"She isn't that old."

"Older than she looks. There's something queer about her."

"What?"

"You don't never hear her coming. Light-footed and light-fingered. And the smell in her room . . . Fusty!"

Renarte was in her room then. She had gone there to be alone and in the dark. She sat on the bed and stared at the limitless phosphorescent night, a thousand quivering stars imprisoned in the square of the window frame. An angle of bleached light fell askew the old-fashioned washstand in disarray, the earthenware basin awash with water, the jug on the floor. Inside the basin there floated the blandly upturned face of the moon. After a while she walked to the window and collapsing on her knees, as one who might drink a solemn toast, put her lips to the basin and drank the moon-filtered water.

The chandeliers were only partly lit, leaving the skein of the stairs, the hollow halls on the floors below in variable twilight. Festivities had awoken other parts of the house: here nothing stirred but the draught knocking at old windows, nothing was about but shadows bulging behind tall-boys, lingering amongst scrolls of a gilded cornice, flying across groined ceilings.

As she passed a low circular window overlooking the terrace, movement caught her eye and she stepped back, thinking of the police. Afterwards she stayed crouching for several moments, with bright still eyes inquiring after something below. Later she went on again, trying various doors, finding them locked or a desert of dust-robbed furniture. In the end a group of whispering people with a nurse emerged a few yards ahead, and she waited in an angle till they had gone.

The room was hardly more awakened than the others: the light refracted from the snow outside was no less stealthy, here also silence attended. The bed was spruce with voluminous linen. Somehow its whiteness and the white light from the snow together contributed an untimely omen of intruding spring. In the bed, though by no sound or sight or movement, she knew someone was lying.

Presently he said: "Who is it?"

"Nobody."

"Nobody has to come in here now."

"I know."

"You know everything."

"I see things other people don't notice . . ."

"You must be a hobgoblin."

" . . . but I understand nothing." She went on, "That was why I came," and she moved close by the bed. Curtains, falling from a coronet on the ceiling, parted either side of the pillows. He turned his face slightly towards her and she realized why his voice had surprised her: she had been expecting him to be old.

He said: "Why should you want to see anyone die?"

"I wanted. . . . Because I want to see someone released."

"But you are quite young."

"Less young than you. It's the half-light.

I think I've lived a long time."

"And you seem very pretty."

"What I seem is not the creature I am. That's why I am always alone."

"But you have friends."

"No."

"Or relations."

"No."

"Where do you live?"

"Nowhere."

He looked away and said slowly, whether from embarrassment or distaste: "I can't die until the foxes come." He added: "But the nurse doesn't understand that."

"Perhaps they have come already."

IMMEDIATELY, it would have been eagerly, he tried to move upwards, saying, "Why? Why do you say that?" and achieving nothing, dropped back. "Have you seen them?" When she did not answer, he said again, more feebly, fretfully, "Have you seen them?"

"I thought the shadows. . . . There was something moved on the terrace when I passed the window."

"Carol singers?"

"No."

He said with impatience "Where? I must see," and tried to lever himself up.

Less facile than usual, she fumbled nervously, doubling a pillow behind his head and she draped the muslin curtain back from the long bay window. But he was too weak, and what at first he saw was her

figure which came partly between him and the light. After a silence he only said: "But those are the clipped box trees. The snow makes them look dark and gives them strange shapes." Then he said: "Those are the shadows of people moving in the ballroom, decorating the tree."

Finally, the effort was too great to stay even propped up, inevitably he began to slip down. "Isn't it Christmas Eve?"

"The longest night."

THERE was a pause and then, very low, he said: "They might come yet." He sighed and seemed to settle more deeply into the piled-up pillows. When what seemed like several minutes had passed, all at once he raised his head and started to say something, but it was barely articulated and she only distinguished the beginning: "Peace and. . . ." The rest did not reach his voice.

Without special intent, as she supported his head back to the pillow, she bent and kissed him.

★ ★ ★

"I could have sworn I heard people talking." The nurse came briskly in. But the room was deserted. The boy on the pillows was dead.

Askance at finding the window open, she shut it with an unexpected bang, and drew the heavy curtains. But although lights no longer fell out across the terrace, a shadow flickered from the darkened, sleeping house to join others waiting, black and motionless, under the ashen moon.



"But, gentlemen, you're not dressed!"



Peter Clark

all that is best in fur at

Emba Cerulean Sapphire mink bred to perfection in natural colour, a stole of soft grey-blue.

Debenham & Freebody

WIGMORE STREET, W.1.

Continuing from page 19

EMERGENCY IN THE GOTHIC WING

him to dance a polka—"My!" she happily panted. Arthur, of a more serious turn of mind, suggested now was the moment for playing Murder—to which Anastasia replied that *she*, for one, disapproved of blood sports.

"I revere your principles, my dear lady; I revere your principles," murmured Mr. Blomfield, plying her with a highball, for she looked lonely. "Yet, as the poet says, Christmas comes but once a year. And to me that's a heartening, beautiful thought."

"You're easily pleased Mr. What's-your-name," sneered Anastasia, and in a tone which detestably echoed around the drawing-room. "This is, I suppose, your first view of civilized life? One can hardly wonder your head is turned. Do all American ladies," she went on to ask, eyeing Mrs. Blomfield, who was once again wrapping herself in furs as she cooled off after the polka-dancing, "dress like Esquimaux the whole time?"

The furious Sprangbys did not know where to look. "Let's play Murder," implored Lady Cuckoo, earnestly. So they did; it was followed by Sardines, then hide-and-seek. Momo was the life and soul of the party: all were in form, however—shrills of rapture rang through the Hall; pursued and pursuers tore up and down stairs, and someone (perhaps Arthur's sister) in search of further terrain, unlocked the door of the Gothic ballroom and hilariously was followed into its darkness by several others. Subdued, some time later, they all filed out again—in order to regain breath, they played racing demon.

UNCLE Theodore subtracted Lady Cuckoo from the merriment and led her to a sofa in a corner. He felt it devolved upon him to point out that what she needed was a protector. "Terrible people prey on you," he said, frowning at Anastasia across the room. Lady Cuckoo, serene in a pink brocade not less lovely for being ancient, replied that her children all did their best. "And now," she fondly said, "there'll be Arthur, too."

"When are he and Phyllida to be married?"

"Quite soon. Won't that be lovely!"

Uncle Theodore manfully cleared his throat. "And when, my dear," he inquired, "are we to be?"

"Oh please don't, Theodore—not at Christmas!" Lady Cuckoo glanced at the clock and rose. "Time for bed, I think!" she called to them all. "Poor Santa Claus will be waiting to do the stockings."

A count of heads, preparatory to the move upstairs, found one or two of the party to be missing—Mr. Blomfield, for instance, was not on hand. It could be taken that he, Arthur and Uncle Theodore were either assisting Santa Claus or taking a nightcap in the library. "Or maybe," said the comfortable Carrie Blomfield, "they even went for an outdoor stroll—I'd say this Hall should look wonderful in the moonlight." Up, therefore, trooped the women and children.

THE night was lovely; ancestral elms cast shadows over the moon-blue landscape; here and there a late light gleamed on the snow—away in the distance, a clock struck twelve. Lady Cuckoo, leaning for a moment out of her window, felt at Christmas peace with the world; and she thought with love of all those gathered under her roof. Did the Gothic Wing count as her roof also?—by leaning out, she could just see its silhouette projecting blackly into some laurs. . . . "Oh dear," she thought. "Anastasia did succeed

in mortifying the Blomfields! . . . Well, I wonder how she will sleep tonight. I almost hope. . . . Oh dear, what a wicked thought!"

In the Wing itself, Anastasia sat tensely up in her fourposter, nursing her knees with her bony arms. Candles, which provided the only light (the Wing had not been wired for electricity) rendered Gothic shadows the more intense—somewhere away in them crouched Sims, petrified by extreme nervousness: from time to time he let out a whimper. "Sims, don't be neurotic!" raged Anastasia—she had made a nest for her pet on the quilt beside her, but in vain. She felt deserted by all—and, indeed, was not Momo the worst? Never had she had such a disillusionment: his behaviour tonight had been almost *ordinary*—she had come on him, paper cap on his head, sliding down the banisters with Arthur's sister! And to think that, only a week hence, he was to make his debut (sponsored by her) as a totally incomprehensible solo flautist at the Utopian Hall.

Momo, scuttling ahead of Anastasia into the Wing, had no doubt sensed her disapproval—for now, two doors away from her, he had penitently returned to Art. Note by note, in a minor key, he was picking out upon his flute the perhaps most incomprehensible of his melodies up to date—and never had any artistic sound struck less pleasingly upon his patron's ear. "Stop it, Momo!" she shrieked, but without result. She leaped from bed, wound herself into a pallid and flowing robe, and set off to tell Momo what she thought of him.

A CHARNEL draught, danker than mere cold, met her as she opened her bedroom door. Only vaguely now did she recollect that she had heard some sort of nonsense about this Wing. Sims, who rather than stay alone had come jittering after her, uttered a canine shriek and again fled—as well he might. For the vaulted corridor was not, as it should have been, in darkness—up the shaft of the staircase there, wavered a blue and, it seemed, phosphorescent glow. "Momo," moaned Anastasia, "come out! Where are you?" The flute stopped dead—but Momo did not appear. Anastasia (who, give her her due, had nerve) drew a deep breath, approached the head of the staircase and peered down.

Someone, or still worse, Something, was at the bottom.

That blood-freezing pause—would it ever terminate?

Then—"Peace, troubled spirit!" said Mr. Blomfield, tremblingly waving upward his blue torch. Faint was the glimmer of his *pince-nez* as he peered up the spiral at Anastasia.

Never yet had his interest in the occult brought him within actual range of it. To enter the dreadful ballroom, while it was open, and to be there at midnight had been his plan—armed with psychic notebook and spirit camera Mr. Blomfield had taken up his position during the game of hide-and-seek. But, alas, what

appeared to have happened was that someone (probably Arthur, in one of his fits of zeal) had locked the ballroom again, on his way to bed—and, of course, done so from the outside. Here, therefore, was Mr. Blomfield, incarcerated with who knew what? The good man, loth to cause a disturbance, aware of having taken an undue liberty, had endured his plight for as long as possible—would not somebody come to find him—would not loving Carrie raise an alarm? Midnight struck; doomed silence girt round the ballroom—he dithered the small blue spotlight of his torch around the malignant interior. Windows?—they were high-set and out of reach; for Mr. Blomfield was not a tall man. Far, now, from him was any thought of further tampering with the spirit world; his sole hope was that it might leave him alone. . . .

HOURS seemed to pass: now, he could but envisage what must have happened—Carrie had dropped asleep, as she often did, the moment her good head had touched the pillow; and so, as she always did, she would sleep till morning. And a no less blameless slumber, no doubt, had claimed the Sprangbys. . . . His morale had reached its lowest ebb when unearthly flute-notes began to curdle the air. This, no doubt, was the overture to the Worst.

And now, from out the darkness above, glared down the unholy Queen of the Revels.

"Why, Mr. Blomfield!" complained Anastasia, recognizing the *pince-nez*.

"Why, my dear lady," said Mr. Blomfield, recognizing the toothiness. "This," he added sincerely, "is a great pleasure! I was—er—taking a peep around."

"You quite frightened my little dog."

"Could I," ventured Mr. Blomfield. "come up, I wonder?" Anastasia, clutching her robe to her, asked: "What do you mean?" in a chaste and forbidding tone.

"Madam, it seems I cannot get out any other way."

"How extremely peculiar," grumbled the lady—modestly vanishing back into her room. She did, however, allow Mr. Blomfield transit. But in vain. For Uncle Theodore, on his way to bed, had guaranteed the sanctity of his bathroom—it was found that the upstairs door of the Wing was no less firmly locked on the outside. And, as Phyllida had more than once pointed out, once inside the Wing one was out of earshot. In vain had many been known to scream.

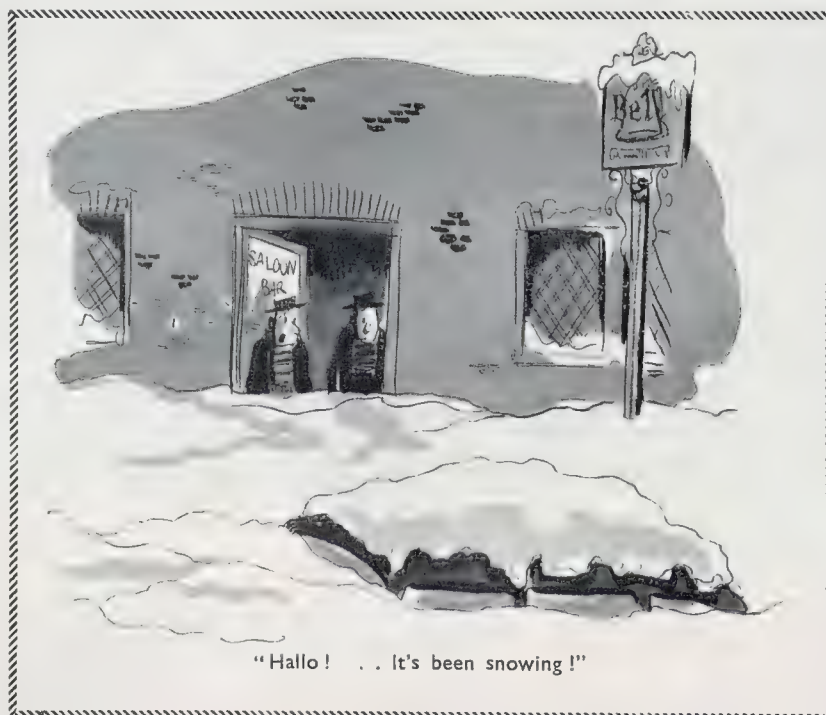
IT really is sometimes wonderful," Lady Cuckoo beamed, on Christmas morning, "the way everything works out for the best. Once they all three knew what had happened, they were quite happy. Momo dragged in his mattress, and they made a little camp around Anastasia's bedroom fire. Dear Harry's accustomed to camping (people do, you know, by choice in America) so he was able to show them how. And he poked the jackdaws' nests out of the chimney."

Then he told Anastasia about Red Indian art; and as nobody else in this old-world country seems to know anything about that, of course, she was absolutely delighted. As for Momo, he started composing illustrative Red Indian music on his flute; and Harry Blomfield got so excited he's going to sponsor Momo all round America. . . .

"Anastasia's a different woman this morning—of course she knows *we* still don't know about Art; but, darlings, she even said, 'Happy Christmas!' . . . Poor Carrie was a little worried, of course, when her tea came and she woke to find Harry not there; but Amelia traced him almost immediately. . . . All the same, it was naughty of you, Theodore—you must not be such a selfish bachelor!"

"Well, my dear, there's always one cure for that."

"Oh, don't, please—oh dear, there go the bells: where are they all? We must start for church."



"Hallo! . . . It's been snowing!"

THE END



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The Little Christmas Tree

• Robert Tredinnick •

IT was a bright, perky little sapling when it was taken from the estate nursery bed on the edge of the wood known as Botany Bay and planted, together with a number of other small fir trees, in the wood itself. "Make a fine Christmas tree you will, one day," murmured the forester as he heeled the little sapling into the soft, heavy ground. "You bet I will," the little sapling said in reply, as he shook his tiny branches expansively in the soft autumn breeze. But the forester didn't hear him, so the little sapling settled himself down in his new surroundings which he considered much superior to being just one of a row of other saplings in the estate nursery bed.

THE Christmas season came round as it always does, and one bright, frosty morning the little sapling heard the sound of voices coming through Botany Bay towards the particular part where he and a number of fir trees of varying ages and sizes grew. "There's to be two twelve foot, two ten, three six and one twenty," and the little sapling recognized the voice as that of the forester who had planted him in the autumn. He thought for a moment as the forester and his two assistants wandered amongst the fir trees scrutinizing each tree of any size with an appraising eye. "It won't be me," he sighed, "I'm not six foot, I'm not ten foot, I'm not twelve, and I'm most certainly not twenty foot high. At least not yet I'm not," and he stretched himself as much as he could, just in case the forester might decide that he was big enough to be a Christmas tree after all.

The next Christmas came round, and the next, and the next, but each time the forester and his assistants passed him over. The other young saplings that had been planted at the

same time had grown well and strongly, but the bright, perky little sapling had scarcely grown at all. It was most strange, especially as he tried to grow so much, because of all the saplings in Botany Bay he really wanted to be a Christmas tree.

The fourth year three of the saplings that had been grown in the same row in the estate nursery bed were taken as Christmas trees by the forester.

"Take me, too," the perky little sapling called out as the forester and his assistants loaded up the trees on to a cart. But his cries were all in vain. He was too small, and small Christmas trees were of no interest to the forester nor his assistants for that matter. They wanted big trees.

"I'll grow! I'll grow, I will grow!" cried the perky little sapling, "I'll grow so much this year that I'll be the finest Christmas tree ever taken from Botany Bay!" he said to himself. Then the snow began to fall and it took him all his time to prevent his small branches from snapping off under the weight of it as it settled thickly all over him.

BUT the snow melted and the days grew longer. The buds on the other trees began to show green and the first primroses and wood violets pushed up their heads to catch the pleasant warmth of the spring sunshine as it seeped down on them from above.

All very well for them, thought the perky little sapling, but what about me?

And indeed he may well have been concerned because he hadn't grown an inch, not even a fraction of an inch, and he was already over six years old.

He knew that the spring would change to summer, that summer would soon become autumn and that autumn preceded the Christmas season, by which time if he

was to be taken as a Christmas tree he would most certainly have to grow, and grow fast.

It was a problem for the perky little sapling, one to which there seemed no solution.

Somewhere in Botany Bay a very cunning vixen lived, and in the spring of the year she used the space near the fir trees as a playground for her cubs. Many of them had played round the perky little sapling when they were very small.

HE enjoyed it as they chased each other again and again round the space that had been originally allowed for his growth. Somehow it made him feel that he still had a chance to become a Christmas tree when instead of fox cubs there would be children gazing with wondering and excited eyes at his branches a-glitter with tinsel, candles and coloured glass bobbles, with a beautiful fairy doll or a star at the very top.

But as the fox cubs grew they deserted him. Each year it was the same; only the cunning vixen came to give the scene any semblance of real similarity.

She would look at the perky little sapling as if to say, "So you're still here!" and then encourage her little ones to play.

And the perky little sapling would sigh as if he knew just what it was that the vixen was thinking—"Yes, I'm still here, worse luck!" he would say, but the vixen was far too occupied with her family to hear him as he waited hopefully for the cubs to chase each other round and round him.

Then one Christmas time the forester and his assistants came as they always did into Botany Bay Wood. Up to the perky little sapling, though by age he was no longer a sapling really, went the forester. "Just the

[Continued on page 60]



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Continuing from page 57

THE LITTLE CHRISTMAS TREE

job," he said, and his two assistants agreed.

The perky little sapling felt a glow run right through every branch. At last he was going to be a real Christmas tree, at last he was happy.

As they took him away from Botany Bay he quivered with excitement.

"I mind the day I planted that little 'un," the forester remarked as the cart loaded with Christmas trees trundled along towards the small side road leading to the big house. "I mind how strong and perky he looked. Make a fine Christmas tree, I said, as I heeled him into the ground. Rum how Nature don't always live up to expectations ain't it?" and the two assistants agreed that it was. "Leastways he'll serve the purpose, leastways there's that to be said for him in spite of never growing, leastways what you might call growing, in the manner of speaking." Then he, too, was quiet, and the perky little sapling was conscious of a wonderful feeling of fulfilment and adventure.

AND indeed he had every right to feel as he did. The instructions from the owner of the big house had been "Not more than three foot, but strong and sturdy." The perky little sapling was absolutely right for whatever rôle there was in store for him.

The next day he had his first and only train journey, and as he neared his destination his excitement was so intense as to be almost unbearable. At the terminus he was taken to a large shed piled high with packages, bicycles, perambulators, geese, turkeys, holly, mistletoe, Christmas trees and sacks, but because he had a special label on him marked "Express" he wasn't allowed to remain there very long. He was bundled into a large van, and given his first and last van ride. It was almost too much for the perky little sapling. Only the day previously he had been in the all too familiar surroundings of Botany Bay Wood, within less than twenty-four hours he'd been in a train and a van for the first time in his life. To have experienced either was an event,

but to have actually done both was quite astounding.

The van jolted and stopped, started and jolted and stopped again. The journey seemed endless. Then quite suddenly the van stopped once more and the perky little sapling was taken out and handed to a smart-looking commissioner in the entrance hall to a large building. "Isn't it sweet," said a pretty young girl at the reception desk, but the commissioner didn't share her views for he sniffed and replied as he took the perky little sapling through some swing doors at the end of the entrance hall, "Bit small, I should have thought." But the perky little sapling didn't mind what anyone said about him any more because he was going to be a Christmas tree.

The commissioner carried him through a series of corridors until he came to a door marked "Private," he waited a second, then knocked on the door.

From inside a voice called "Come in," and the commissioner opened the door handing over the perky little sapling with a brisk "It's just arrived!"

"PUT it over there," said the occupant of the room, and the perky little sapling found himself on a table at the far end of the room.

"I hope they'll decorate me tonight," he said yawning as he did so, and that was all he remembered because he was thoroughly tired out what with the journey in the train, and the van, and the excitement of everything.

It was not until the following day that any notice was taken of the perky little sapling. First he was put into a pot, covered with red crinkly paper tied round the middle with glittering, golden-coloured tinsel. Then the decorating began. Tinsel was wound in and out of his branches, tiny sparkling bobbles were hung on the end of his firm little branches, it was just as he'd always imagined it would be, when the fox cubs had played their chasing game round and round him. But there were no children, and to be a real Christmas tree there had to be children. There was no beautiful fairy doll or star either, but to the perky little sapling it was the children that mattered most.

"Very nice, very nice indeed," said a voice from among the people gathered in the room, "but it needs something on top to finish it off."

"Of course I do," the perky little sapling stammered, but nobody heard him. All the

same a tiny fairy doll was produced and fastened to the top.

"There!" said another voice with pride, and the person who had first praised his appearance said, "Fine," adding "Now take it to the studio."

"But the children, where are the children?" the perky little sapling cried out, but nobody heard him, which is quite understandable; human beings can't hear what trees say, even little trees like the perky little sapling.

And he was carried carefully in his pot to the studio.

There he was placed on a small stage behind which was a pale blue backcloth. Then on either side of him small figures were placed first on the right, then on the left.

SHEPHERDS and sheep were on the right, and an angel was suspended above the shepherds on thin nylon threads, and on the left there was a manger in which there was a tiny child, and there was straw, and three cows, and the mother of the child was bending over the child and behind her, very close, stood the father, and a little way beyond the manger three men knelt carrying gold and frankincense and myrrh, and the perky little sapling suddenly realized how beautiful it must look. If only there were children, he thought. But there were only grown-ups.

Then someone called out "Lights" and immediately the little stage was flooded with a brilliant light, so dazzling that it quite startled the perky little sapling.

Then a voice called out "Shoot," and then the light went out.

And that was all.

The perky little sapling, pot and all, was carried back to the room in which he had been decorated, and crowds of people came in to look and admire him, wishing each other, "a happy Christmas." If only there were some children, the perky little sapling wished.

Then everyone went away and he was left quite alone.

BUT the perky little sapling need not have been disappointed because although he never knew it millions of children saw him and exclaimed "What a lovely little Christmas tree."

For the perky little sapling was flashed on the television screens to introduce the special Christmas Day television programmes, and though he was too small ever to be taken from Botany Bay Wood to be a real Christmas tree he was just the right size for the purpose for which he had been used.



Roy Davis



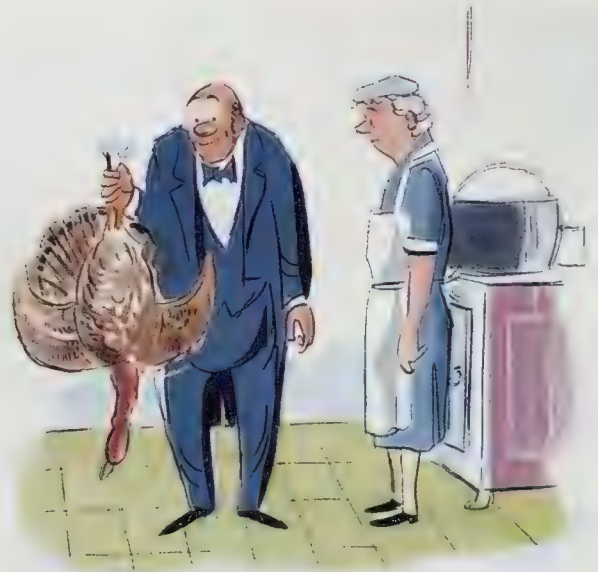
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OUR CHRISTMAS CONTRIBUTORS

Glan Williams, illustrator of *On The Death Of A Favourite Cat* and *The Tale Of Jennifer Jane*, is The TATLER's most recent discovery of a satirist of the contemporary scene. Born in Pentrechwyth in Wales, as his voice demonstrates delightfully, he is a Rugger enthusiast and an amateur violinist of distinction.



Frederick Banbery, designer of our cover and illustrator of *Speak To The Wind*, served as an R.A.F. pilot during the war, largely in India. Was awarded a medal by the Art Directors Club of America for his magazine work in the U.S. in 1950, and is now working again in this country. The latest book illustrator of *Pickwick*.

Robert Tredinnick, author of *The Little Christmas Tree* and many other children's stories, served as a major during the war. He is a noted broadcaster, authority on gramophone records, on which he writes for The TATLER, and an expert landscape gardener.

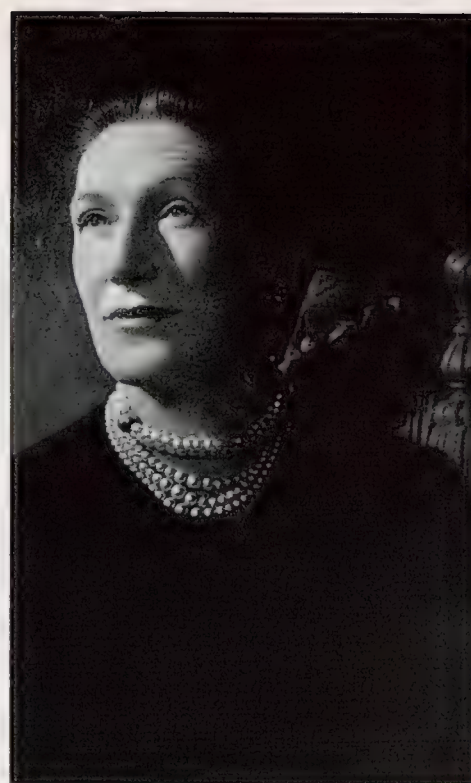
Nancy Spain, educated at Roedean, is a great-niece of Mrs. Beeton of cookbook fame and served in the W.R.N.S. during the war. Creator of Miriam Birdseye, who figures in her detective stories. Author and illustrator of *The Tiger Who Couldn't Eat Meat*, a new children's story.

Michael Harrison, a novelist of major distinction, is also an historian, antique expert and journalist. He is the author of *The Story Of Christmas* (1953) and the acknowledged master of research on this, his favourite subject.

Sir Geoffrey Cory-Wright, Bt., who took the colour photographs of the Tower of London, served in the R.F.C. in World War One and in the Buffs. His wife is a daughter of the late Sir Herbert Tree. He has three sons, and two others were killed in action. An artist-photographer, he is a frequent contributor to The TATLER.

Canon Edward Carpenter, of Westminster Abbey, is the author of the books *Thomas Sherlock* and *Thomas Tennison, His Life And Times*. He was educated at King's College, London, where he gained a History Bursary, the Gladstone Prize and the Barry Prize. Sometime rector of St. Mary, Harrow, and of Great Stanmore. A leading authority and writer on ecclesiastical history.

Alex Graham, creator of Briggs, also works under a pseudonym in a different style, easily detected by regular readers; as also does **Dennis Mallet**, illustrator of *Paris Was Palpitating!* both of whose artistic methods are familiar to The TATLER's readers.



Elizabeth Bowen, The TATLER's literary critic, probably the most distinguished woman novelist now writing, is widely known for *The Heat Of The Day*, her best-seller published in 1949, and for her well-loved *The House In Paris* (1935). Recently returned from a lecture tour in the U.S., she is just completing a new work.



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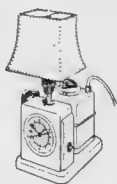
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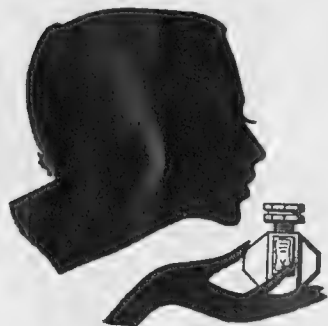


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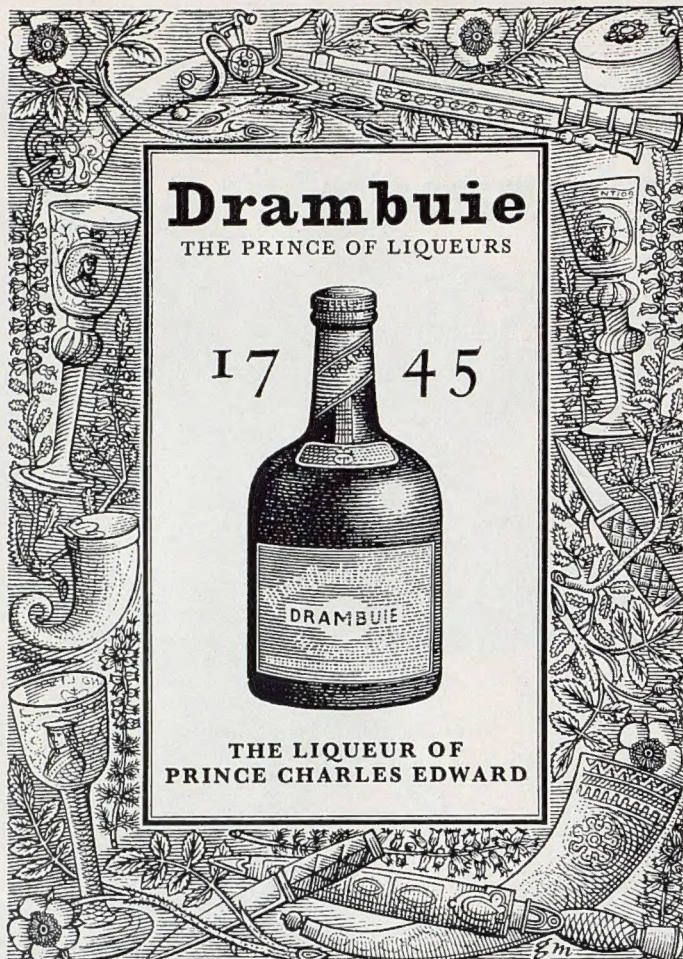
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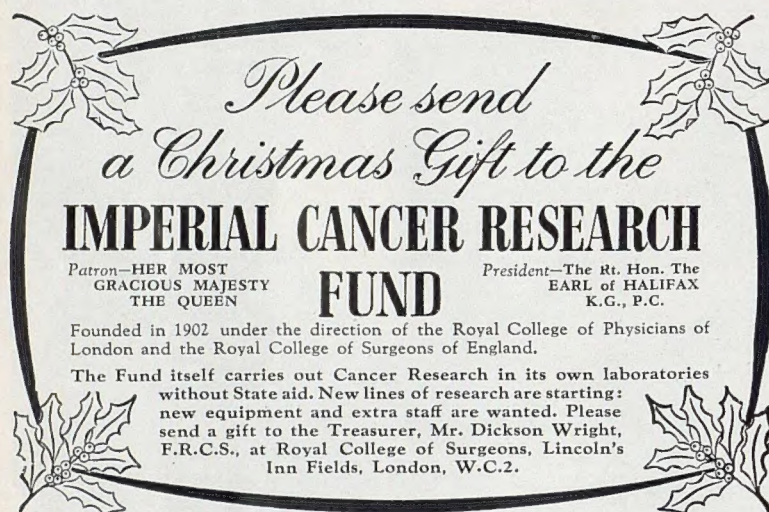
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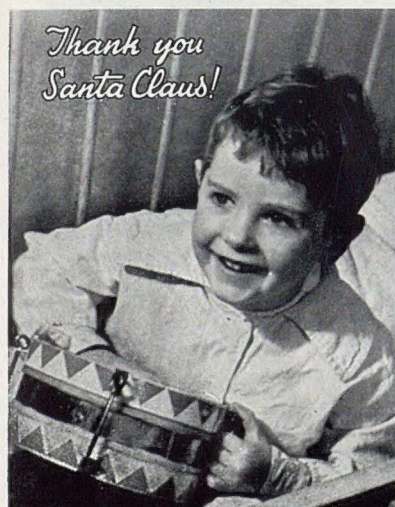
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